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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

DECEMBER 29, 1997

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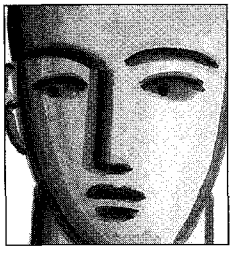

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HOW ARE THE BELL MONOPOLIES STOPPING COMPETITION?

One family at a time
with outrageous costs
with interminable delays
with endless hassles

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Rob Cramer would have to work for 2 days to earn the money a local Bell monopoly charges to switch local service. ($261)

The Bell monopolies charge up to $261 to allow you to change local phone companies. To change long distance companies, a process that takes just about as much work, they charge just $5 or less.

This is another ploy clearly meant to discourage people from asking to try another local phone company. And, unfortunately, it works.

The Bell monopolies are creating new barriers to competition every day. But we won't stop until consumers get relief. MCI will work with federal and state regulators, and other new entrants, to open local markets to offer people a real choice. Together, we will make the regional Bells obey the spirit of the law, pass the Telecommunication Act's Fair Play Test, and stop abusing consumers.

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Source: Line installation and order charges effective 11/10/97: California $261, Florida $180, Massachusetts $126, Oregon $117, Wisconsin $92.

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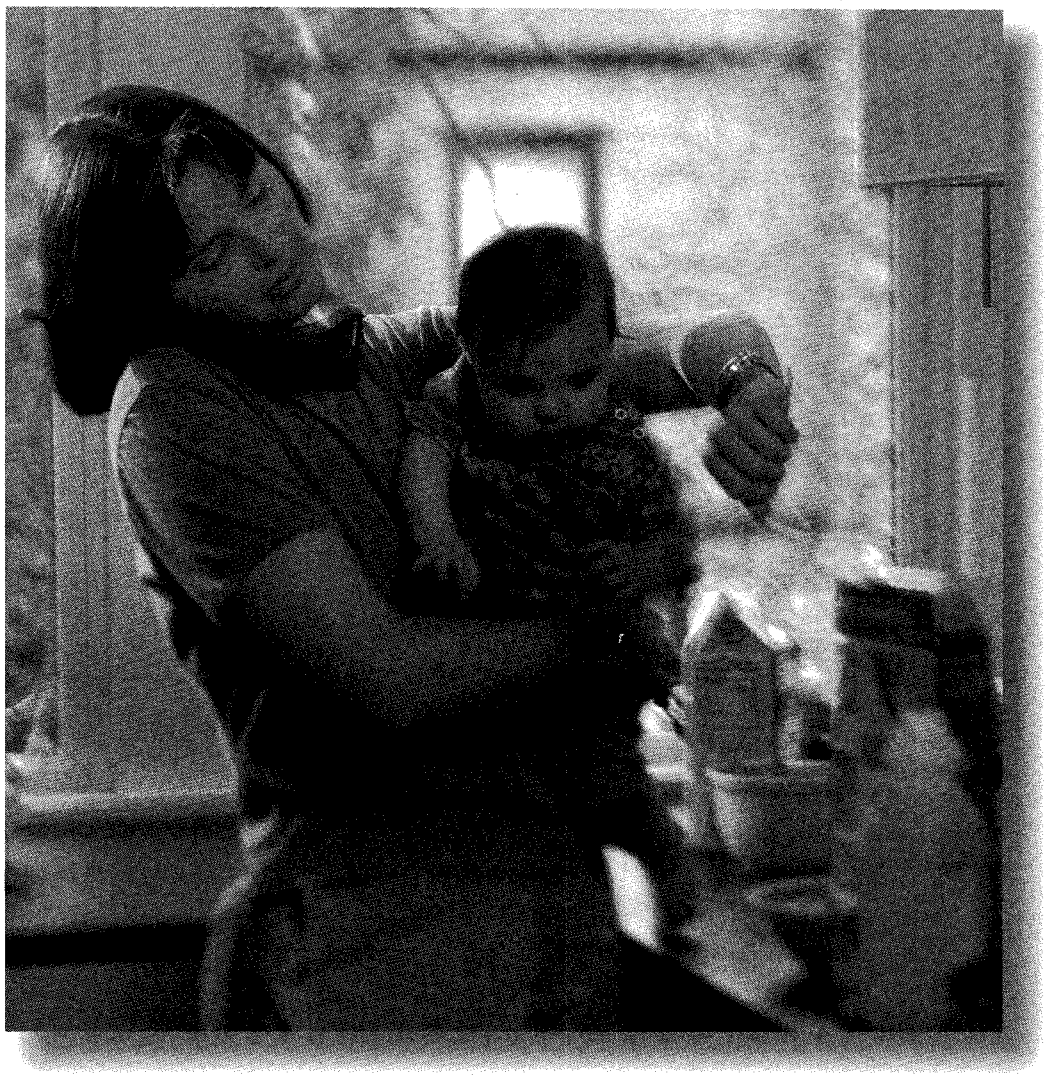
The local Bell monopolies are forcing the Clark family to wait up to 6 weeks just to switch phone companies. 6 long weeks of hassles and higher rates.



People who ask to switch to a local phone company are often left in a state of limbo. Since they don't know when, or if, their request will be honored by the Bell monopoly. In some cases, people have to call their Bell monopoly as many as eight times to get any action at all, while at the same time paying higher rates and not getting the carrier of their choice.

The Bell monopolies are creating new barriers to competition every day. But we won't stop until consumers get relief. MCI will work with federal and state regulators, and other new entrants, to open local markets to offer people a real choice. Together, we will make the regional Bells obey the spirit of the law, pass the Telecommunication Act's Fair Play Test, and stop abusing consumers.

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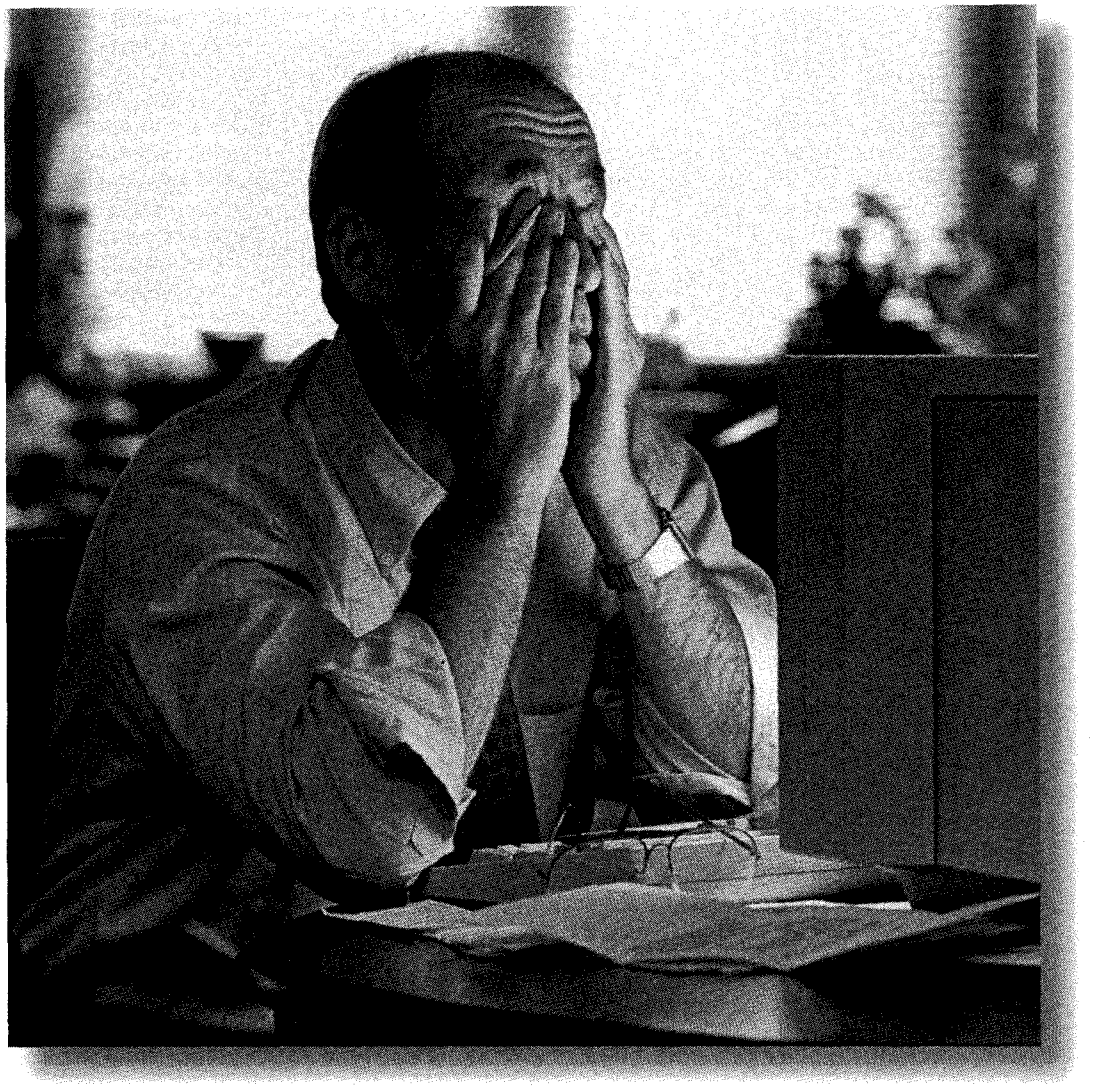
John Stinnett had the right to choose a new local phone company. He just wasn't prepared for the Bell monopoly bickering, arguing and hassles.



The Bell monopolies have their ways of keeping residential and small business customers. Instead of letting you switch local providers quickly and easily, Bell monopolies have argued, misled and delayed. Other times they pressure you to explain why you want to switch. Then there are those intimidating letters from the Bell monopolies that try to persuade you not to exercise your right to choose.

We think switching to a new local phone company should be as easy as choosing a new mechanic, a dry cleaner—or a long distance company.

The Bell monopolies are creating new barriers to competition every day. But we won't stop until consumers get relief. MCI will work with federal and state regulators, and other new entrants, to open local markets to offer people a real choice. Together, we will make the regional Bells obey the spirit of the law, pass the Telecommunication Act's Fair Play Test, and stop abusing consumers.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Put a cork in it

To the editors:

Hardly "strange," as Jason Zengerle describes it ("Water Over the Dam," November 24), the move to drain Glen Canyon Dam is exactly what twenty-first-century environmentalism will become—a shift away from doomed containment strategy toward a restorational one. Zengerle regards Glen Canyon as a pawn in a chess game. It isn't. It is a unique, intricate place to experience the passing of geological time, and, as much as any place on Earth, we need it the way it was.

As for Lake Powell, 20 million people do not "depend on the lake" for water. The hydroelectric benefits are marginal. And Zengerle's claim that evaporation from the lake "eventually returns to the Earth as rain" is maddeningly incompetent. Does he believe that it rains back into the lake? That water in the sky is the same as water on the ground in the desert?

As for the reemergent Glen Canyon, not one biologist in one hundred would agree that the recovery of Glen Canyon is "impossible." The toxic sediment and bathtub ring arguments lack credibility.

JOHN THEOBALD
Calistoga, California

More power to him

To the editors:

As a former legislative director for Bill Richardson and as someone who was not interviewed for Jacob Heilbrunn's story ("Ambassador Feelgood," November 24), I take exception to his characterizations of my former boss.

The smug, self-righteous tone of Heilbrunn's story is worse than any faux pas allegedly committed by Richardson in his defense of American ideals at the United Nations. So Bill is friendly and gregarious. If Bill's style is different than the old-boy network that so dominates American (and foreign) policy, more power to him. As Heilbrunn takes pains to point out, this country is changing demographically. Hispanics and other people of color are becoming an important part of the nation's political life. To have an ambassador to the world's most important body who represents diversity himself is a great thing.

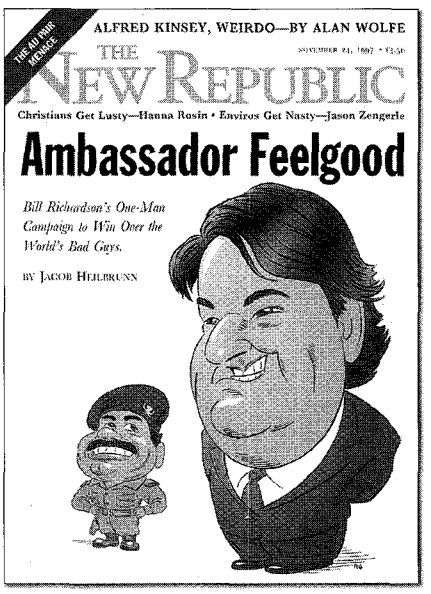
We should celebrate Richardson's defense of this country's values and his representation of our concerns. To condemn his actions out of hand is to defend the old, hostile, white-male school of politics that was so typical of this country during the cold war. We should thank Bill Clinton for giving him this responsibility.

BENJAMIN FINZEL
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I was very disappointed to read Jacob Heilbrunn's profile of Ambassador Richardson as it unfairly and wrongly criticizes the ambassador's commitment to democracy in Burma.

I am forever grateful for Mr. Richardson's efforts during the late 1980s when, as a congressman, he helped me come to the United States from Burma. He was also instrumental in securing humanitarian assistance for my fellow dissident students who were then living along the Burma-Thai border.


THE AU PAIR MENACE
ALFRED KINSEY, WEIRDO—BY ALAN WOLFE
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Christians Get Lusty—Hanna Rosin • Enviros Get Nasty—Jason Zengerle
Ambassador Feelgood
Bill Richardson's One-Man Campaign to Win Over the World's Bad Guys.
BY JACOB HEILBRUNN

After seven years of trying to educate Congress on issues relating to Burma, I have learned that there are many who can talk about the issue, but there are very few who have actually done something. Bill Richardson is one of those few.

MIN SUR MIN
Brooklyn, New York

Deleteable

To the editors:

I reread Ian Ayres's anti-Microsoft sputter several times, dismayed and baffled that an article built on a bogus premise could find its way past TNR's editorial filters ("Breaking Windows," November 17). Sorry, but no matter how viscerally one may hate Bill Gates for his success, it is not true that Microsoft's Internet Explorer cannot be deleted.

As part of my Win95 installation procedure, I delete Microsoft's Internet browser and install the more user-friendly Netscape Navigator in its place. I've done it dozens of times. And as for "disconfiguring" competitors' software—where did Ayres get that from?—www.alt.conspiracy.microsoft?

The issue before the Justice Department is not deleteability—it's bundling. The claim is that, by shipping its browser free with Win95, Microsoft is unfairly foisting it upon the consumer, edging out competing browsers. Never mind that the competing browser—Netscape's Navigator, which, without Microsoft, would enjoy a monopoly—was always available free of charge. What's keeping Netscape from gouging us? Microsoft. What's keeping Microsoft's browser free? Netscape. The system works.

GREG BRATOFF
Via the Internet

Book smart

To the editors:

Only a curmudgeon could take offense at Roger Rosenblatt's tongue-in-cheek essay on presidential libraries ("Underbooked," December 1). If anything, I agree with Rosenblatt: the word "library" woefully understates the range of activities and services provided by the libraries as administered by the National Archives and Records Administration. From the beginning, these institutions were seen not as places to house books, but to make them—supplemented over the years by countless journalistic articles, Ph.D. dissertations, films and documentaries, and even, as seen recently, the stuff of congressional hearings.

Rosenblatt mentions a figure of $83 million for the George Bush Library in Texas. The number is misleading. In fact, the actual cost of the Bush Library is approximately $23 million, all of it raised by the Bush Foundation.

I must also point out that our presidential libraries are anything but "empty" as suggested in Rosenblatt's essay. Last year alone they were visited by 1.3 million Americans. Several libraries which are located throughout the country have hosted nationally televised debates and become known for their imaginative, changing exhibits, which broaden the scope of their historical and cultural offerings. Such programs ensure that America's presidential libraries are much more than libraries. Far from being the "shrines" portrayed by Rosenblatt, they are for school kids as well as scholars. Built with private dollars, they perform immense public services. Enough, in fact, to fill many books.

JOHN W. CARLIN
National Archives and Records Administration
College Park, Maryland

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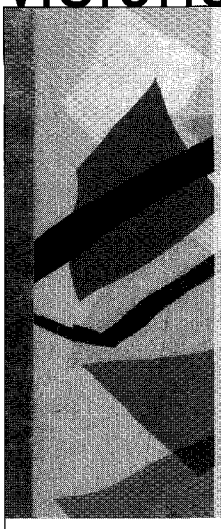
visionaries



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Carl Malamud
foreword by His Holiness The Dalai Lama
afterword by Laurie Anderson

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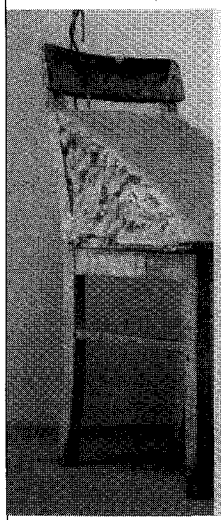

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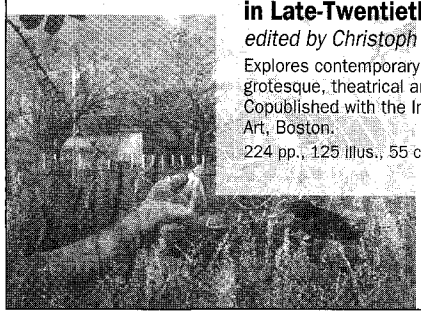

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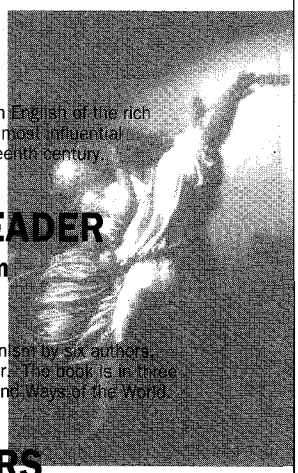

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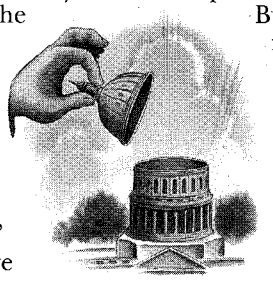
TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

The Powell puzzle

President Clinton's national dialogue on race has now produced its sound bite. During a town meeting in Akron, Ohio, last week, the president confronted affirmative-action critic (and occasional TNR contributor) Abigail Thernstrom with this question: "Do you favor the United States Army abolishing the affirmative-action program that produced Colin Powell? Yes or no." Congratulations to the White House speechwriter who devised this rhetorical ambush. Thernstrom, faced with a choice between approving of affirmative action and disapproving of Colin Powell, was stymied. She said something about how the United States Army prepares young people to achieve, and the president, savoring the triumph, moved on.

Of course, this exchange could not have occurred if either Clinton or Thernstrom knew how Powell was actually "produced." The first stages of his career support those, like Thernstrom, who argue that a strong family, hard work, and education—not government help—are the keys to overcoming discrimination. Raised by strong Jamaican immigrant parents, Powell graduated from City College in New York, where he joined ROTC and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. This was before race-based scholarships; indeed, Powell became a junior officer in 1958, three years before the term "affirmative action" was first used in an executive order by President Kennedy.



Powell was getting ahead at a time when military bases in the South were islands of relatively color-blind meritocracy in a sea of segregation, and Powell made the most of his opportunities. He rose to the rank of major and graduated second in his class at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1968. At this point, however, serendipity took a hand. In mid-1968, Powell was sent to Vietnam. His first assignment was to a secondary unit in the Army's new, poorly organized, Americal Division. Leafing through an Army newspaper one day, the division commander spotted a story noting Powell's high class rank at Leavenworth. He made Powell chief of operations at division headquarters—an unusually high post for a major. On the division staff, Powell got experience and made connections that would prove crucial to his military career.

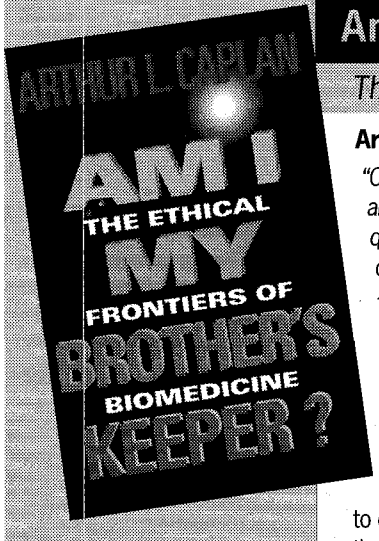
But if the general hadn't been reading the paper that day, or if the Army had assigned Powell to a less chaotic division in the first place, none of that would have happened.

Back in Washington, Powell won a coveted White House Fellowship and spent a year at Richard Nixon's Office of Management and Budget. This introduced him to the network of Republicans who would later promote him in the Reagan and Bush administrations. Though it stands to reason the Nixon White House was particularly pleased to receive an application from a young, black Army officer, it was only several years after Powell's fellowship that clear-cut racial preference played a role in his rise. In 1977, Jimmy Carter appointed Washington lawyer Clifford Alexander as the first black secretary of the Army. It was up to him to approve the list of colonels recommended for promotion to brigadier general each year. Alexander announced that he would not sign an all-white list. Or, as he put it in a 1995 *New Yorker* profile of Powell by Henry Louis Gates Jr.: "I just told everyone I would not sign the goddam list unless it was fair." This tripled the number of black generals; Powell was among those promoted.

Ironically, Alexander's plan seems to be one point on which Clinton and Thernstrom agree. This was the "proper kind" of affirmative action, Thernstrom wrote in *Newsweek* after her clash with the president, "not a quota but a widening of the net." But what Alexander's program really seems to show is that it's not so easy to distinguish a quota (bad) from a "widening of the net" (good). Yes, Alexander was just asking the Army to scour the ranks for more candidates, but the way he made the request didn't leave the Army much choice. He was, in effect, ordering the advancement of people who had not yet met the ordinary criteria for a general's star. This moved some black colonels ahead of some equally qualified, or better qualified, white colonels.

continued on page 45

New from Arthur L. Caplan



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 29, 1997

FOUL SHOTS

We did not plan to write about Latrell Sprewell. Naïvely, we believed that when a black professional basketball player physically assaults his white coach, it is merely an act of violence, not an act of politics. But there are those whose celebrity hinges on turning every emotionally charged encounter between whites and blacks into national psychodrama. And so, the usual suspects have appeared to denounce the National Basketball Association's decision to suspend Sprewell for a year—the harshest disciplinary measure not related to drugs the NBA has ever taken—as a manifestation of racism.

Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco, across the bay from where Carlesimo and Sprewell's Golden State Warriors play their home games, has called for the NAACP to investigate the case. Chicago columnist Carol Slezak has called Sprewell "a political prisoner"—even though he will never go to jail because neither Carlesimo nor the league plans to press criminal charges. Johnnie Cochran has agreed to be Sprewell's attorney, explaining that the league's one-year suspension is a violation of "fundamental fairness." "There has been a rush to judgment," Cochran intoned, reviving one of the catchy phrases that made him such a hit at the O.J. Simpson trial.

A rush to judgment is a pretty mild description of what Sprewell himself visited upon Golden State Warriors coach P.J. Carlesimo. At a recent practice, Carlesimo was badgering his ball club, which has one of the worst records in the league; Sprewell judged this injurious to his pride, rushed to grab the coach around the neck, and threatened to kill him. The two men were separated by teammates, but Sprewell went after Carlesimo again once practice was over. Coached now by Cochran, Sprewell has issued an apology, which is at least an improvement on his initial comments to the effect that Carlesimo had provoked him with a torrent of verbal abuse.

We actually agree that Carlesimo insulted Sprewell. He is a notoriously loud and hypercritical man, despite having failed to transfer his success as a college coach to the professional ranks. But that's the point: we live in a society where there is no shortage of such abusive personalities, but also no shortage of nonviolent remedies for dealing with them—even if the jerk in question happens to be your boss. You can sue. You can file a grievance with a union.

Given all that, it is disgraceful to cast Sprewell as the victim in this story. There is a sense, however, in which his behavior is mitigated by circumstances. Latrell Sprewell made $7 million per year. He spent two years in college—or at least two years playing basketball for the University of Alabama. Yet apparently at no point in that transition to stardom in the NBA did anyone teach him how to deal with affronts like Carlesimo's. He leapfrogged the middle class, and with it, middle-class values.

Certainly no affirmative-action program is less merited, and does more to undermine the belief in meritocracy in the black community, than the widespread admission by American universities of basketball and football players with no interest in, or preparation for, academic learning. But now one existing system for the production and justification of hoodlum athletes is being buttressed by another. It is not enough that being ill-educated and violent is compatible with being rich and famous. Now it should also be a source of racial pride. The defense of Sprewell as a martyr to racism is the civil rights "movement" at its worst—the excusing of those aspects of the oppositional inner-city black culture that do African Americans the greatest harm.

If Latrell Sprewell must be a symbol of something, maybe it should be the following: every day, hundreds of thousands of young African American men and women from the inner city go to work in gritty, low-wage employment. Yet every day some of these young people are fired, either because they cannot accept workplace discipline, or because employers, judging them only by their skin color, assume that they cannot accept workplace discipline. When sociologist William Julius Wilson, one of America's leading students of urban poverty, asked business owners in Chicago why they were reluctant to hire young, black men from the ghetto, they cited a "bad attitude" close to twice as often as a "lack of job skills." Indeed, the argument that "the never back down" ethos of the inner city retards the employability of its adherents has become a sociological cliché. And from that grim fact much misery follows.

Yet every day, many young men resist the provocations, real and perceived, of their employers. They do their jobs, collect their pay, work overtime, and get ahead. What do they have in common with Latrell Sprewell? And what message is Johnnie Cochran sending them? •

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NOTEBOOK

BETWEEN IRAQ AND A SOFT PLACE: It is in details that doctrines are to be found, religious doctrines and strategic doctrines. In *The New York Times* last week, a remarkable front-page story by Tim Weiner brought the doctrines of the American military down to the details, and described a scandal. (A *real* scandal.) On January 16, 1991, Lieutenant Commander Michael Speicher, a Navy pilot, became the first American lost in the Gulf war when his Navy F-18 went down in the desert in western Iraq. In 1993, the Pentagon received a report that a local hunter had come upon the ruins of the American jet. The Pentagon sent up a spy plane, which "detected a man-made symbol in the area of the ejection seat," according to Pentagon documents cited by Weiner. The American flyer, in other words, may have survived the crash. But when special-operations soldiers proposed to go find him, General John M. Shalikashvili said no. His explanation, according to Weiner's brave sources in the Pentagon, was that "I do not want to have to write the parents and tell them that their son or daughter died looking for old bones." The bemedaled former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, now retired, told Weiner that "there was no overwhelming need to put our soldiers at risk to covertly search a three-year-old crash site." Does the Pentagon ever consider anything other than the possibility that American soldiers might get hurt? Since the "victory" in the Gulf carried the "Vietnam syndrome" into stone, so that the use of American forces cannot be contemplated unless the circumstances of its use are so overwhelmingly in their favor that nobody will get wounded or killed, the Pentagon has been reluctant to allow the president to avail himself (in those rare and uncomfortable moments when he has wished to avail himself) of this ultimate instrument of foreign policy. It was this mentality that permitted the Bosnian Serbs to enjoy the genocide of the Bosnian Muslims for years. But in the incident Weiner uncovered it was *an American* that the Americans refused to go after. This was not caution, this was cowardice. We imagine that many people in the Department of Defense are angry about what they read in the *Times*. But we expect nothing to happen.

SECRETARY OF SWEET-TALK: Madeleine Albright deserves her reputation for blunt talk on human rights, but she did not enhance it last week by choosing Ethiopia as the first leg on her tour through Africa. Speaking in Addis Ababa, Albright praised the "new generation" of African leaders—including Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi. But the administration tends to confuse this group's support for the U.S. (which is real) with its support for democracy (which is not). And this led Albright, meeting with Zenawi, to make soothing sounds about "the difficulty of being able to completely change a government after so many years ... democracy is always something in progress." The secretary of State should have looked at Human Rights Watch's *World Report* for 1998. Page 36 reads: "Ignoring constitutional rights, the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi did not tolerate pluralist party politics, cracked down on critical media, and aggressively sought to co-opt labor and professional associations, and other civil society structures." A work in progress, indeed.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: It's hard to drive anywhere these days without spotting a road sign touting a group or person who has "adopted" that stretch of asphalt—i.e., made a commitment to ensure that it remains litter free. Adopt-a-Highway programs are so popular, in fact, that some areas are running out of miles to mother. "We have a lot of celebrities in Southern California who want to participate, but we just can't find spots for them," a state official recently told *Forbes*. So it's nice to hear that a new opportunity has emerged. Last week the United Nations Association of the USA announced its Adopt-a-Minefield program. No, this doesn't mean Boy Scouts will be traipsing across the Third World's killing fields: UNA-USA just wants donations to finance demining efforts by trained professionals. Already, California winemakers have announced a "Mines to Vines" effort, pledging funds to demine parcels of land and turn them into vineyards. At long last: a marketing strategy for turning swords into plowshares.

BON VOYAGE: Newt Gingrich returned from his tour of London earlier this month duly impressed with Britain's majesty and tradition. His excursion was all the more enjoyable thanks to Atlantic Richfield Co., which magnanimously covered Gingrich's airfare, lodging, and meals, and also paid for his three traveling companions. (Yes, this is perfectly legal.) "Every American should make this trip," Gingrich gushed. We couldn't agree more. Now, if only Gingrich could arrange for powerful business interests to pick up every American's tab.

COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS:

Abortion Rate in U.S. Off Sharply

—*The Washington Post*, December 5, 1997

Pause in Abortion's Decline

Since 1990, the number of women having abortions has steadily fallen, with a steep decline in 1995, but early reports show that the trend was reversing itself in 1996. Page A14.

—*The New York Times*, same day

BUTT SERIOUSLY: "Due to an editorial error, last week's article by Michael Fumento mistakenly referred to the 'fat-butt fit' fallacy, it should have said 'fat but fit.' That change has been reflected in our archives."
—recent editor's note in the online magazine *Intellectual Capital*.
(Thanks to Mike J. Walker.) •

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Ally McBeal's quirky appeal.

LADY'S NIGHT

By Steven D. Stark

So far, the ratings haven't been spectacular for "Ally McBeal," the new drama on Fox that airs opposite ABC's "Monday Night Football." Yet no show has generated more buzz, or a more passionate following among its viewers, than this whimsical story of a fictional Gen-X female lawyer in Boston. "Ally McBeal" has been the subject of essays in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Salon*, *TV Guide*, and the always effusive *Entertainment Weekly*, and it has inspired at least half a dozen Web sites that feature everything from pictures of the cast to quotations from the show. (A sample: "Men are like gum, anyway. After you chew, they lose their flavor.")

Like many Fox shows, "Ally McBeal" targets the under-35 crowd with ironic dialogue and unconventional (by television standards, anyway) plot lines that cover everything from cross-dressing to nose-picking. "Ally" also does slightly better among women than men, and therein lies a clue to its significance. With its frequent sexual subtexts—in one sequence, Ally likens drinking cappuccino to foreplay, then gives a long how-to lesson while her male colleagues watch, tongues waggling—"Ally McBeal" has quite predictably spawned myriad debates about gender. These range from the playful—for example, whether the unisex bathrooms inside Ally's firm are the wave of the future—to the more serious—namely, whether Ally herself, played by former Broadway actress Calista Flockhart, is a betrayal of just about everything the women's movement was once trying to achieve. "Ally McBeal's contempt for women is about as loathsome as TV gets," Tom Carson wrote in the *Village Voice*. "The trick is that its tone is all enlightened, sympathetic geniality."

This criticism is not hard to fathom. A single Harvard Law graduate who has gone to work for the firm of her now-married former boyfriend, Ally is pretty much flummoxed by whatever befalls her. "All I wanted was to be rich and successful with three great kids and a husband waiting to tickle my feet—[and] I don't even like my hair!" she cries in one episode. Even in court, the frequently flustered Ally exhibits a penchant for the kind of malapropism that would have won her a spot on the Art Linkletter show a generation ago. "The rules are changing," she says in one legal argument. "It used to be blacks couldn't marry whites. Now we all agree that those couples make the cutest babies."

But while I don't consider myself a big fan—I, too, find her character a little annoying—I do think this line of discussion has lost sight of what's really original, and impressive, about "Ally McBeal." The show is important not so much for what its lead character says or does, but for what the program itself attempts and symbolizes. This is a drama about a woman, and such excursions have been surprisingly rare in the history of prime-time television. Of course, comedies since "I Love Lucy" have featured females in starring roles—from Donna Reed to Kirstie Alley. Beginning with Lucy's attempts to break out of the mold by getting out of the house, the industry learned quickly that the way to tame anything threatening or controversial—like the role of women in American society—was to put it in the form of comedy. (The recent outing of "Ellen," daring as it was, actually fits this established pattern.) Thus, long before "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," sitcoms like "Bewitched" and "I Dream of Jeannie" were dealing in a primitive way with how America could learn to deal with "empowered" women.

Prime-time drama, however, has usually been another story. From "Dragnet" to "Bonanza" to "Dallas," this is a man's world, with male stars and a constant emphasis on action and violence. Even today, there are leading women on "E.R." and "NYPD Blue," but everyone understands that the characters those shows cannot possibly do without are Doug Ross and Andy Sipowicz.

In the '70s, there were a few top ten dramas that featured prominent women leads like ABC's "Charlie's Angels" or NBC's and ABC's "The Bionic Woman." But they tended to be part of what the industry then called the "jiggle" genre. (At CBS, William Paley was said to have asked his prime-time planners, "Where are *our* beautiful girls?") "Cagney and Lacey" successfully broke the mold during the '80s, as did the short-lived "The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd." But "Cagney and Lacey" only succeeded after one of the original leads was dropped and replaced by the more glamorous Sharon Gless, a move that had to be made, according to one CBS executive, because the old character was "too tough, too hard, and not feminine." In the '90s, two prime-time dramas focusing on women have garnered large audiences—"Touched By an Angel" and "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman." But both are utter fantasies—one about celestial beings, the other set on the frontier, a century ago, so its portrait of a woman doctor seems more heartwarming than barrier-breaking.

It is against this backdrop that "Ally McBeal" has generated such interest. The efforts of writer-creator David Kelley, whose past credits include the Emmy-winning "Picket Fences," are far from perfect. But it's fair to say that *any* semirealistic drama about a modern woman, especially one that forsakes constant action to focus on her private life, would generate an enormous amount of attention. Note, too, how Kelley has gone about the task: in the same way that "M*A*S*H" could only deal with Vietnam by moving the war to Korea and tempering the drama with wisecrack humor, "Ally McBeal" couches its serious questions about being a woman in

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the workplace in exaggerated fantasies, oddball characters, and silly scenarios. (Sometimes too silly: one episode had Ally giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a fat man who falls in love with her.)

Still, it's a fair surmise that, now that Kelley is opening this door, others will follow, not only with more successful inner-directed "feminine" dramas, but with other forays into the remaining bastions of male authority on television as well. A more feminized version of the late-night talk show featuring a Rosie O'Donnell or even Kathie Lee Gifford would appear to be a natural up against wise guys Leno and Letterman. Game shows will eventually change, as the Pats and Vannas of the world switch places. To those who think that Oprah was the culmination in television's feminization of America: they ain't seen nothing yet.

STEVEN D. STARK, a commentator for National Public Radio, is the author of *Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events that Made Us Who We Are Today.*

THE HARD QUESTIONS

FILM PROJECTS

By Nathan Glazer

Fred Wiseman's new documentary, *Public Housing*, is in his trademark style: not a word from the director, not a title to explain what one will see or is seeing (aside from the initial "Public Housing"), not a single scripted voice-over. The viewer of this remarkable film is on his own, in the middle of what he divines is Chicago's Ida B. Wells housing project. It is summer; the opening scene takes place in the office of the "Resident Advisory Council" where a black woman is on the telephone demanding housing for a young woman—actually, a girl—with a new baby.

The woman is the council's president, and she wants to know why, with 200 vacant apartments, the girl and her baby cannot immediately get one of their own. Why, the council president demands to know, is the housing authority demolishing buildings when there are so many homeless and the waiting lists are so long? Why does the authority have to screen people before giving them apartments? While the prospective tenant waits through the screening process, the council president complains, vandals make the vacant apartments uninhabitable. Finally the person on the other end promises an interview in a few days. The girl walks out, and the council president tells her to keep up her spirits.

The film goes on for another three hours, but that one scene lays out neatly the wrenching dilemma of public housing reform. If the housing authority does not screen tenants, then the project becomes a worse place to live, and all the residents suffer. But public housing is supposed to house the most needy, and the most needy often make bad neighbors—and, when in close quarters, bad neighborhoods. So what should happen to them?

Not long ago, reformers thought that establishing tenant councils, like the Resident Advisory Council in the movie, would improve matters by making residents and managers copartners in the same way community control of schools was supposed to improve education. Participation would beget responsibility and, in turn, a better quality of life, or so the argument went. But the council has no control over money, and it has all the problems of dealing with a distant bureaucracy.

Now, another reform is being implemented: demolishing much of the public housing stock. Many experts attribute public housing's failure to its high-rise architecture, and so the Clinton administration has set about knocking down some of the high-rises in Chicago and elsewhere. But the waiting lists, as the council president says, are long—too long for the housing left over. Doesn't it seem contradictory to demolish housing units when the need is great and the money to replace them is insufficient?

Historically, advocates for inner-city residents have pushed a third approach: programs designed to help tenants overcome social and economic difficulties. The film provides several examples of this strategy at work: a woman warns a group of women that welfare reform means they must find jobs; another woman, from the Child and Family Preservation Center, warns a group that the courts will take children from parents deemed unfit or unable to provide for their children. This housing project clearly does not suffer from lack of social services or programs. Yet the project remains a depressing place.

A clue as to why comes from watching the most impressive social service of all—the housing police—in action. In the film, the housing police spend a surprising amount of time helping residents. At one point, they advise a young woman they suspect of loitering for drugs to get hold of herself. She is in a drug-treatment program, but drinks, and the policeman tells her with concern: "You're not supposed to drink when you're in the program. You've still got a little beauty left in you. You've got to stop! You're going to be my special project."

But the primary responsibility of the housing police remains law enforcement, and as the film captures officers, it's clear that this aspect of their work has become depressingly routine. When the police stop and search young men, the young men are passive—clearly accustomed to, and not particularly bothered by, police attention. The American Civil Liberties Union would be astonished at how the project police behave—the people in the projects are not. Drugs are everywhere. In scene after scene, someone turns out to be in a drug-

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treatment program, or was, or is going into one, or is being urged to go into one, or applying to go into one.

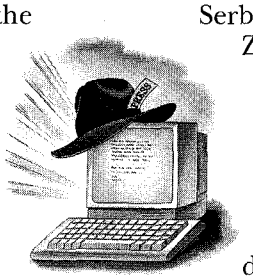
Shortly before the film was made, the Department of Housing and Urban Development took over the Chicago Housing Authority, and the film depicts meetings with tenants designed to explain what the takeover means. The tenants learn of Section 3 money, which is available to start tenant-owned businesses. The government will provide loans of up to $100,000; the Chicago Housing Authority will offer contracts of up to $500,000, with no public competitive bidding, to corporations owned at least 51 percent by tenants. Later, the film catches an ebullient HUD official outlining the new opportunities for blacks: "I will give away three-hundred million dollars this year," he tells a community college class. "My boss is a Latino woman. His boss is a brother. *His* boss is a Latino man. And his boss is the president! There's nothing but minority people, all the way from me to the president!" He suggests as an example that a tenant firm turn off the lights in the projects and split the savings with the CHA. Entrepreneurship by tenants? One wonders whether it will fare any better than earlier bright ideas. But one must keep on trying. •

CROATIA DISPATCH

ON EDGE

By Marc Champion

The new history textbook issued to schoolchildren in Croatia this semester poses the following questions to twelve-year-old students: Who conducted the war against Croatia? What did the Greater Serbian aggressors do during the war? And what crimes did the Greater Serbian aggressors commit? For the Serb children in this bucolic Danube region where the Yugoslav wars began, the answers to these questions would be rather awkward, something like: "My father conducted the aggression." Not surprisingly, when the Serb kids brought the new books home, their parents became apoplectic. They refused to send their sons and daughters back to school until the books were withdrawn. Four hand grenades were even tossed at primary school buildings. (No one was hurt.)



In the former Yugoslavia nothing, it turns out, is easy or exactly promising. Six years after the war in eastern Croatia, history books are designed not to teach ethnic tolerance or what actually happened. They are designed to teach who is boss. And the boss in eastern Croatia is about to change—hence the new books.

On January 15, the last blue-helmeted United Nations peacekeepers are to be pulled out. On that day, the Croatian government will regain full control of eastern Croatia for the first time since local Serbs and the Yugoslav Army brutally drove out the Croatian population in 1991. January 15 will therefore be a day of triumph for Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, who will have successfully reversed his country's last territorial loss from the war. But the departure of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) will also begin a difficult test for Croatia.

In 1995, Croatia—with a silent nod of approval from the United States and its allies—retook the lost enclaves of Krajina and Western Slavonia in massive military offensives, driving out the entire Serb population. Ironically, this has made the Croats, and not the Serbs, the only sure winners to date in the barbarous game called "ethnic cleansing." Two years later, Croatia is still blocking efforts to return Serb refugees to their homes. Could Eastern Slavonia be next on the list for "cleansing"?

Western officials say they're confident the answer is no. Just days before the primary school bombings, officials were celebrating the second anniversary of the U.N.-brokered agreement—an agreement that set up the UNTAES mandate in 1995 and saved Serbs here from the fates of their ethnic brothers in Krajina and Western Slavonia. "Not any place else has the peace process significantly reversed ethnic cleansing, but it's happening here," the outgoing United States ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, told me at the celebration. Indeed, with a multiethnic state in Bosnia still an illusion, Eastern Slavonia offers the international community its best chance to reintegrate a "cleansed" population in former Yugoslavia.

The great advantage here is that the dominant (Croatian) authorities will be trying to relocate their own (ethnically Croatian) people into the region. In Bosnia and elsewhere in Croatia, it is the United Nations or NATO that has to try to persuade the authorities to allow expelled minorities back in. A much tougher proposition.

There are between 120,000 and 140,000 people in the UNTAES region now, and almost all of them are Serbs. With the police under Croatian control, Zagreb should have relatively little trouble returning the 74,000 Croats it says were displaced by the war. The real question is, how many Serbs will stay? Success is vital to the international community, whose record in ex-Yugoslavia will be judged largely on whether it proves that "ethnic cleansing" doesn't work.

And despite the U.N. and U.S. declarations of victory, they may be going home too soon. Three days after their celebration, leaflets appeared in the streets of Vukovar, the quaint riverside town that the Yugoslav Army reduced to rubble during an 80-day siege in 1991. "Serbs," the leaflets read, "it is exactly 11:55. There are only two months until January 15. From

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December 1 we are putting you into a reservation. We like to hunt wild animals.... We are going to kill slowly and quietly, but not tenderly ... a debt is a debt." The date was well chosen. On December 1, the UNTAES-trained Temporary Police Force changed into Croatian uniforms.

Some Croats will return to Dalj, a village on the Danube just a few miles upstream from Vukovar, which was traditionally mixed but has been pure Serb since the ethnic cleansing of 1991. I joined a table at a popular bar called Medison, thinking that here, if anywhere, I would find people too young to have been poisoned for the future. But no sooner had I sat down than Raiko, 23, and Iovica, 28, began pulling up their pant legs and shirts to show off their war wounds. Between 1991 and 1995, Iovica was shot three times and Raiko five. In a few months, could Raiko and Iovica be sitting here comparing wounds with young Croats? There are some causes for optimism. Zagreb has made all the right promises about nondiscrimination, amnesty, human rights, and the restoration of property. Branimir Glavas, the Croatian tough who ran the regional capital of Osijek while at least nine prominent Serbs were assassinated and 18 villagers were massacred, was at last forced to resign in October.

In Dalj, most Serbs said they would stay for now. But then Dalj is a fairly secure village with its own local authority. Other villages, closer to large Croatian population centers, are already emptying. Iovica, who comes from Tenja, just outside Osijek, was unconvinced. "We'll leave when the U.N. troops leave," he said as he fingered a huge ruffled scar across his abdomen. His family has already bought a house in Serbia. By the time the Croats take control of Tenja, he said, it will be virtually empty.

There are plenty of reasons for Serbs to be nervous about Zagreb's intentions, even without the anonymous leaflet campaign. Glavas, though deposed from the top job in Osijek, remains in the city as—of all things—the head of relations between the Croatian Army and civilians. And loopholes in the amnesty law have left all Serbs "wondering if we're not on some [war crimes] list," said Stevan Babich, the mayor of Dalj.

And then there are those school textbooks. Under pressure, the Croatian authorities have agreed to withdraw them, defusing the crisis temporarily. But ethnically Croatian children in the region will still be reading a poem from their Croatian language textbook that begins "I'm a little Croat" and goes on to describe the fathers of their Serbian schoolmates in Dalj as child-murderers. All of which suggest that the international community will have to keep a close watch on eastern Croatia after January if another round of "ethnic cleansing" is not to become the next chapter in Croatia's history.

MARC CHAMPION covered the war in Croatia in 1991 for *The Independent* and is now a freelance writer based in Moscow.

Why we need supercolliders.

MATTER MATTERS

By Edward Witten

If you're not a scientist, you probably skipped right over the story in last week's newspapers about the more than $500 million the U.S. will spend over eight years to help build a supercollider on the French-Swiss border. And if all you know about supercolliders is that Congress nixed funding for a proposed one in Texas four years ago, then you might think that the European one is yet another extravagance.

But while projects like this have a huge price tag, their contribution to science is well worth the cost, particularly if that cost is shared internationally. Crucial scientific questions can be addressed in no other way. For now, the Clinton administration and Congress have pledged U.S. support for a very exciting international collaboration. But it remains to be seen whether, over the long run, there will be the necessary political support for this and other needed projects.

What is a supercollider? Many of nature's secrets are revealed only when subatomic particles collide at extremely high energies. Elementary particle accelerators, and now supercolliders, have been developed for this purpose over the last 50 years. Discoveries made in accelerators enabled theoretical physicists to unearth in the '60s and '70s what we now call the Standard Model of elementary particle physics. The Standard Model gives a stunningly elegant and successful description of most of what we know about the subatomic world. Using a few subtle concepts, it explains an amazing range of phenomena, from electricity, magnetism, and light, to the behavior of atoms, molecules, and atomic nuclei.

But the Standard Model is incomplete. Among other things, it does not explain the tiny masses of the subatomic particles. If elementary particles had the huge masses that the Standard Model allows, then there would be no stars, planets, or people, since any collection of more than a handful of elementary particles would be so heavy that it would collapse into a black hole. Accordingly, physicists have suggested a new theory, known as "supersymmetry," to explain what the Standard Model cannot.

Finding supersymmetry would mean discovering a new "quantum" dimension of space-time. What does that mean? In everyday life, we measure space and time by numbers: it is three o'clock, the elevation is two hundred meters above sea level, and so on. Numbers are classical concepts that were known to humans long

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before physicists developed quantum mechanics in the early twentieth century. Quantum mechanics, which is important in the workings of many familiar devices such as lasers and transistors, introduced physicists to a strange new world of subatomic particles in which our ordinary intuition and experience do not apply at all. Quantum mechanics changed almost all of our ideas in physics, but our concepts of space and time have not yet been affected. Finding supersymmetry would change that, revealing a new dimension of space and time that could only be described in quantum-mechanical terms.

Proving that supersymmetry is correct would also give a huge boost to an even more ambitious theory, known as string theory, which aims to unify quantum mechanics and general relativity—Einstein's theory that gravity results from the curvature of space and time. This may sound like something about which only specialists could care, but it actually is the key to answering some of the questions that people who are not scientists most often ask. Astronomers, for example, have observed that the universe is expanding today, and as far as we can tell, this process began in an explosion, often called the Big Bang. But contemplation of the Big Bang raises some obvious questions, like what happened *before* the Big Bang? What was the beginning of time? Because quantum mechanics and gravity were both important near the Big Bang, the answers to questions such as these depend on combining quantum mechanics and gravity to an understanding of the quantum nature of space and time.

Of course, this is all just theory right now. To prove once and for all that supersymmetry is correct, we need to produce the new elementary particles the theory predicts. And the most likely way to do that is with supercollider experiments. Conceivably, an existing accelerator could do the job. Fermilab, operated by the Department of Energy in Batavia, Illinois, or the electron collider of CERN, the European Laboratory for Particle Physics near Geneva, Switzerland, might be able to produce some of the new supersymmetric particles. CERN's beam energy has been doubled in the last few years. Fermilab is slated to resume operation in 1999 with more intense particle beams; the new run should be able to clarify tantalizing hints of supersymmetry that emerged in the last run, during which the top quark was discovered.

But finding supersymmetry at existing facilities would require considerable good luck. The European project that the U.S. has just agreed to join, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), offers much better hope of such a discovery. Scheduled to begin operation at CERN in 2005, the LHC will explore much of what the now-defunct Texas supercollider would have studied. Its energies will be well below the Texas collider's energies, but it will partly compensate for this by using more intense particle beams. The LHC construction price tag is a hefty $2.5 billion—or more, if fixed laboratory costs are included, as the U.S. normally does—but it is well below what the Texas project would have cost, mainly because the LHC has lower energy, is very aggressive technologically, and makes heavy use of existing CERN facilities.

What of the questions that are beyond the reach even of the LHC? The next step beyond the LHC is very likely to be the Next Linear Collider, or NLC, which is now under intensive development at laboratories in the United States, Germany, and Japan. If the LHC becomes the machine that discovers supersymmetry, the NLC could become the one that reveals crucial details of supersymmetric interactions. Part of the excitement in the search for supersymmetry is that it is not a simple matter of answering a yes or no question. We want to know not just *whether* nature is supersymmetric, but *how*. For instance, we want to know how the supersymmetric particles interact and decay, and which ones are lightest. If history is any guide, such details will provide crucial clues to understanding nature at yet a deeper level. An initial discovery of supersymmetry will probably spawn decades of hard work to answer these crucial questions.

Because of the very long lead time that will be required, research and development for post-NLC accelerators must begin now. One of the most novel and intriguing ideas for a really futuristic accelerator is something called the muon collider, which—if practical—could combine the LHC's high energy and the NLC's great precision, while fitting in a smaller space and perhaps requiring a smaller budget than either of those machines. A U.S. national laboratory would do well to invest a small percentage of its budget in exploring the feasibility of a muon collider.

Like the LHC, future accelerator projects will have to be international. While the 19 European states of CERN are bearing most of the LHC's construction and operating costs, Japan, Russia, India, Israel, and Canada have all signed on—along with the United States. But the U.S. contribution was not easily secured: congressional opponents thought it was unwise to invest in a project over which the U.S. had so little control, particularly if it would be physically located overseas. "We've had a crash course in the American system of government," Christopher Llewellyn Smith, the general director of CERN, told *The Washington Post*, adding that it was "much more complex than particle physics."

The U.S. system of year-by-year appropriations for multi-year scientific projects—which comes as a surprise to many of our international partners—is one of the obstacles to our participation in international collaborations. But scientific knowledge knows no borders—and future projects capable of addressing the big questions will be prohibitively expensive for any one country. During the cold war, international competition generated political support for high energy physics; now, the focus must be on international cooperation. Stepping away from such projects would merely cause the United States to fall behind.

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MEN BEHAVING BADLY

By Jeffrey Rosen

At the Supreme Court last week, during the argument in *Oncale* v. *Sundowner Offshore Services*, the justices seemed skeptical of the shipping company's claim that same-sex harassment could *never* be illegal under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Joseph Oncale, the oil-rig roustabout whose supervisor allegedly put his penis on Oncale's head, had sued for harassment, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit held that sexual harassment doesn't include men behaving badly with other men. Oncale may have been harassed because he seemed weak or vulnerable, or because his supervisor was gay; but he wasn't harassed because he was a man. This didn't go over well with the Court: If a Jew can discriminate against a Jew, Justice Breyer asked, why can't a man discriminate against a man?

But as the justices struggled with the question of whether Oncale had been harassed because he was a man or because his supervisor didn't like him, it became painfully clear that many heterosexual advances that are increasingly punished as harassment are similarly hard to think of as sex discrimination. The *Oncale* case shows that the expanding edifice of sexual-harassment law is built on quicksand and should be reconsidered.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 says: "It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer ... to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's ... sex." It's hard to conclude, as the lower court did, that same-sex discrimination can *never* be actionable under any circumstances. Imagine that the Sundowner shipping company had a policy of assigning men to oil rigs and systematically hazing them, while assigning women to office jobs and systematically pampering them. Wouldn't this mean that men, as a class, were being discriminated against because of their sex? On the other hand, as Justice Scalia suggested, it was possible the priapic supervisor, John Lyons, harassed Joseph Oncale not because he was a man but simply because he didn't like him. Justice Stevens suggested that Oncale should have the opportunity to prove at trial that he wouldn't have been harassed "but for" his sex; that is, he would have been left alone on the oil rig if he had been a woman rather than a man.

But how, precisely, would a jury carry out this odd thought experiment, with shades of Woolf's *Orlando*? Because there were no women on the oil platform, who can say how Lyons would have treated Oncale if he had been a woman? Maybe chivalry, or the fear of a sexual harassment suit, would have led him to treat a woman better. Or maybe Lyons wouldn't have picked on women at all because he was gay. (His actual sexual orientation isn't clear from the Supreme Court briefs.) If Lyons picked on Oncale because he was attracted to him, some lower courts have held, then Oncale was discriminated against because of his sex. But this approach ignores both the text and the purpose of Title VII, which bans discrimination "because of sex," not "because of sexual attraction."

During the argument, Justice Ginsburg suggested another approach. Title VII has been interpreted to prohibit generalizations based on gender stereotypes, she suggested; and perhaps its protections should be extended to men who are harassed in the workplace because they are not viewed as sufficiently masculine. Suppose that Lyons picked on Oncale, for example, because he was an effeminate man. Because Oncale wouldn't have been harassed if he were an effeminate woman, Ginsburg suggested, he was a victim of discrimination "because of sex." But this argument, although logically plausible, is even harder to reconcile with the purposes of Title VII. Congress in 1964 had no intention of barring discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the Senate rejected efforts to expand Title VII to include sexual orientation last year.

Ginsburg's conflation of sex discrimination and sexual-orientation discrimination is hard to distinguish, ironically, from that of her old antagonist, Catharine MacKinnon. In a brief filed on behalf of the National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization, MacKinnon argues: "Often it is men perceived not to conform to stereotyped gender roles who are the targets of male sexual aggression." Oncale's supervisors, MacKinnon argues, "were asserting male dominance through imposing sex on a man with less power. Men who are sexually assaulted are thereby stripped of their social status as men. They are feminized: made to serve the function and play the role customarily assigned to

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women as men's social inferiors." As a descriptive claim, this isn't as crazy as it sounds. It was impossible to watch interviews with the slight, anxious Joseph Oncale and not be struck by the fact that he seemed more upset by the attack on his masculine identity than on his ability to do the job.

But as a claim about the text and purpose of Title VII, MacKinnon's argument is absurd. "If acts are sexual and hurt one sex," she proposes, they should be considered "sex-based, regardless of the gender and sexual orientation of the parties." But this view—"if it's sexual, it's gendered," as MacKinnon puts it—would convert Title VII into a federal prohibition on sexual conduct in the workplace, eliminating the requirement that the conduct has to be motivated by some kind of anti-male or anti-female bias that changes the conditions of employment in a discriminatory way.

Although MacKinnon may lose the *Oncale* battle, she has nearly won the war to transform Title VII from a law that bans sex discrimination to a law that bans sexual expression. Consider garden variety heterosexual advances at work. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature" is illegal if the employer threatens retaliation to coerce the employee to submit, or if the conduct creates an "intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment."

But a lot of the conduct that's routinely punished today as quid pro quo harassment and hostile-environment harassment isn't really discrimination "because of sex." Imagine a situation in which a male employer becomes infatuated with a female employee and makes unwanted advances. He's treating her differently than all the other men and women in the workplace not because of her sex, but because of his sexual attraction to her. And some courts have rejected the claim that employers can *never* make employment decisions on the basis of sexual attraction. In 1985, for example, Judge Robert Bork suggested that sexual favoritism shouldn't be illegal: when a woman complained that her female coworker had been promoted because she was sleeping with the boss, Bork said, in effect, that's life.

As a practical matter, Bork has to be right: some bosses may be more likely to trust people with whom they're romantically involved. (Just ask the employees at a mom-and-pop grocery store.) But if sexual favoritism isn't sex discrimination, why are unwanted advances sex discrimination, as opposed to discrimination based on sexual attraction? Catharine MacKinnon says that the former doesn't systematically disadvantage women the way the latter does; but as Eugene Volokh of UCLA Law School notes, Oncale's employers are arguing the same thing: when male supervisors haze vulnerable male employees, the shipping company says, this doesn't systematically disadvantage male or female employees as a group.

As the justices struggled in vain to tether sexual harassment to some notion of sex discrimination, it became clear that lower courts have essentially embraced MacKinnon's radical notion—namely, that any sexual expression in the workplace is sex discrimination. Some courts have treated perfectly neutral speech at work, such as sexual jokes told by and to women and men, as a form of sex discrimination, on the dubious theory that women are more likely than men to find the jokes offensive—or, even more starkly, that a sexualized workplace inherently demeans women but not men. Now MacKinnon is trying to extend her theory to include same-sex harassment among men: even though it doesn't place any particular sex at a disadvantage, MacKinnon says that, like pornography, same-sex harassment constructs the social meaning of gender in a way that disfavors feminine men.

This case presents the perfect opportunity for the Supreme Court to put a stop to creeping MacKinnonism, and to recall the text and original purpose of Title VII. "The critical issue, Title VII's text indicates, is whether members of one sex are exposed to disadvantageous terms or conditions of employment to which members of the other sex are not exposed," Justice Ginsburg wrote recently. This would include an orchestrated campaign by an employer to drive all women or all men from the workplace, because of gender-based animus or a belief that one sex wasn't up to the job. It would include a company policy that systematically favors one sex over the other in hiring, firing, and promotion. But it wouldn't include many amorous advances to individual employees, even, in some cases, those accompanied by threats of retaliation or promises of reward. It wouldn't include pinups and jokes that women might be more likely to find offensive. It wouldn't even include all demeaning epithets (such as "dumb broad"), unless they suggested an employer's animus toward women in general, rather than a desire to get the goat of a particular employee whom the boss happened to dislike.

As for Joseph Oncale, it looks like he will have the chance to prove that he was singled out for special indignities because he was a man. But it's hard to imagine the form that the proof will take. "If this matter is allowed to proceed to trial," Oncale's lawyers promise, "evidence will include the testimony of other victims of John Lyons," including a worker named Kent Brumfield who says Lyons held him down and "sucked a hickey on his neck." So the supervisor had a taste for homoerotic sex games. But whether he chose his victims because he liked them or because he didn't like them, or because he thought they were too feminine, or too masculine, isn't the kind of inquiry that we ordinarily ask federal judges to perform. Sex is the most mysterious of all human impulses, and it can't be tamed by MacKinnonite syllogisms. The Court should get out of this area, where it has already done more harm than good, and where Congress never authorized it to go in the first place. •

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MISS TREATMENT

By Susan E. Reed

Two days after Nancy Vogel had a three-and-a-half pound tumor removed during a hysterectomy, the phone rang in her room in a Long Island hospital. It was her doctor's office. The staff there had just been informed by Vogel's health insurance company, Pru Care, that it would not reimburse her for the cost of hospitalization beyond that evening. "They called me at five-thirty p.m. and said I was to go home, although no one had examined me," says Vogel, a school teacher. She tried to reach Pru Care by telephone, but business hours were over.

Vogel stayed until the next morning, when she nervously tottered out of the hospital—a huge, stapled incision stretching from one side of her pelvis to the other. Pru Care eventually paid for that night in the hospital. But, before the surgery, her gynecologist, Dr. Patrick Vetere, had warned her of complications and, in consultation with two other doctors, recommended she stay five days to be monitored. "I wasn't sure my intestines were working right," explains Vogel, and "no one [at Pru Care] asked me if I had anyone to care for me. For all they knew, I was going home to be alone." For his part, Dr. Vetere says he was never contacted by Pru Care to see if Vogel was ready to be discharged.

Now Vogel and another woman, Musette Batas, are suing Pru Care's parent company, Prudential Insurance Company of America, in New York state court for fraud and breach of contract. Prudential, the class action complaint says, "leads its subscribers to believe falsely that their medical care will be based on the independent medical determinations" of their physicians, and that those medical decisions will not be "interfered with by the Company." The suit claims Prudential actually bases coverage on "undisclosed and unregulated guidelines created by a third-party actuarial company." For its part, Prudential clearly believes its cost-containment policies are both medically and economically sound. Company spokesperson Kevin Heine says, "we believe the law suit is without merit and we expect to win the case in court."

But Prudential and other big firms should probably also expect more such controversy, because Nancy Vogel's case—and others like it—raise much wider questions about the managed-care revolution. The tension between good medicine and cost control has been a fact of American life for some time now. What is perhaps less appreciated is that the costs of managing this trade-off seem to fall disproportionately on women. No one contends that managed-care companies have some irrational hostility against women. Rather, the issue is the much tougher one of "disparate impact"—discrimination that results not from animus, but from rational business decisions.

The guidelines of the insurance companies appear to be gender neutral. But thanks to biological and demographic realities, and to the cold logic of profit maximization, those guidelines have a tougher impact on women than they do on men. Health-care costs, on average, are 45 percent higher for working women than for working men, according to Milliman & Robertson Inc., an actuarial company that sells guidelines to health insurance companies. This is true mainly for the simple and immutable reason that women alone require the often costly care associated with human reproduction. So the greatest savings for managed-care firms often come by truncating treatments uniquely required by women.

"To manage medicine, you have to manage ob-gyn efficiently because they make up so many of a hospital's admissions," explains Dick Liliedahl, M.D., a consultant for Milliman & Robertson. "Hysterectomies make up five to seven admissions per thousand, so it's important to manage those cases efficiently." If Nancy Vogel, for example, had stayed in the hospital for five days, as her doctor wished, it might have cost as much as $3,000 more than the two-day stay for which the company was initially willing to pay.

And Prudential is hardly the only firm trying to limit the costs of treatment for women. Consider the question of pain medication during child birth. An epidural is a local anesthetic administered through a drip tube connected directly to the spine that is often given to women during labor. Last year, United HealthCare of California sent out an "alert" to 5,000 physicians in Southern California saying that beginning August 1, 1996, obstetricians and anesthesiologists should delay placement of an epidural until five centimeters of cervical dilation has occurred. The goal, the alert said, was "to reduce our c-section rate."

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Avoiding unnecessary cesarean sections, of course, is a worthy aim. C-section is the most common major surgery performed on women, and recent medical history has been marked by controversy over whether American doctors have been too quick to prescribe it. (In the mid-1980s, 23 percent of babies in the U.S. were delivered through cesarean section, nearly twice the European rate; in 1990, the Department of Health and Human Services recommended that cesarean rates should go no higher than 15 percent.) Furthermore, a vaginal delivery is about $4,000 cheaper than a c-section. A main reason for the cost differential is that, according to federal law, insurers must pay for at least four days of hospitalization after a woman has undergone a cesarean, compared to two days for a vaginal birth.

The economic rationale for United HealthCare's decision, then, was clear. But how sound was it medically? In its "alert," United said it had conducted its own study of epidural use, and also noted a scientific study done in 1993, by Dr. Jim Thorp. Thorp's study suggested that epidurals prolonged labor and increased the incidence of cesarean section in mothers undergoing their first labors, especially if the epidurals were administered before the cervix was dilated at least five centimeters.

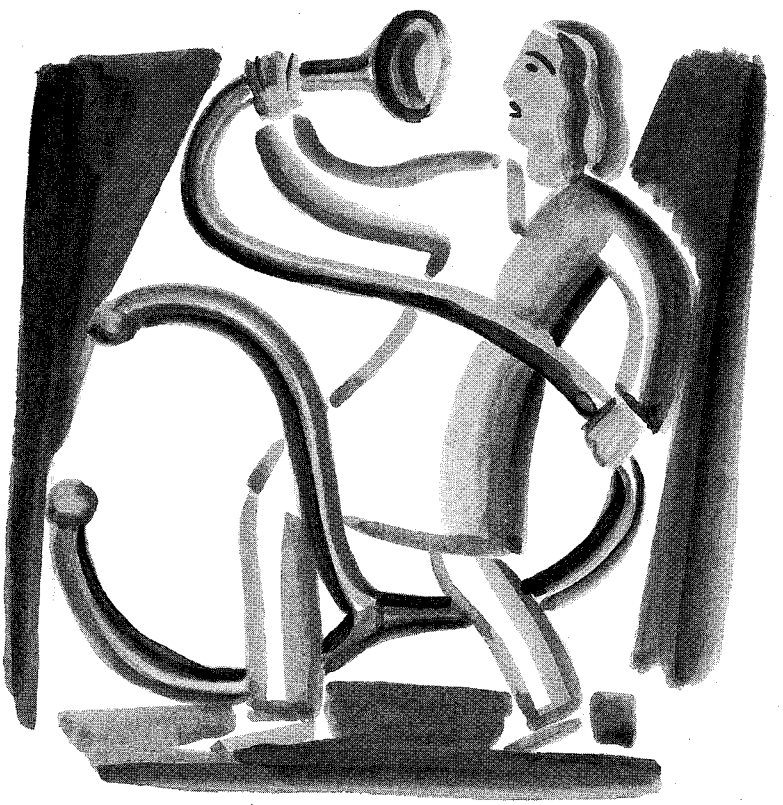

ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY RUSSO FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Thorp, the associate director of maternal and fetal medicine at St. Luke's Perinatal Center in Kansas City, was surprised to hear that United HealthCare alert cited his study. Not one of the company's medical directors, he said, bothered to contact him to discuss his research or to find out what he had learned in the three years since he had conducted it. As it happens, at St. Luke's, the epidural is no longer associated with increased rates of cesarean section. Thorp chiefly attributes this to adding a narcotic to a lowered concentration of anesthesia as well as to delaying placement of the epidural until five centimeters. In addition, he stresses the importance of an experienced obstetric team dedicated to keeping the number of cesarean sections low. Unlike United HealthCare, St. Luke's does not have a policy that stipulates when the epidural should be placed.

When I tried to speak with the medical director who produced the alert, Sue Bush, a spokesperson for United HealthCare, said the director had left the company and the other medical directors hadn't returned her phone calls. For his part, however, Thorp was the first to admit that his 1993 study was "incredibly controversial, generating a lot of emotion on both sides of the issue." Experts argue about whether or not epidurals increase c-section rates. Some studies show they do not. But the one area where many obstetricians and anesthesiologists do agree is that it is wrong to limit patients' choices. "Patients should be empowered with information," says Thorp.

The point is that managed-care firms have enormous incentives to promulgate rules that may rationalize medical practice economically, but may not give doctors and patients the flexibility they need to deal with the limitless variables of real life. Administration of an epidural is as much an art as a science because the intensity of pain during labor varies widely among women and among labors. A woman may have an extremely difficult first birth and an easy second. Recalls Joy Hawkins, director of obstetric anesthesia at the University of Colorado: "With my first delivery, I had my epidural at three centimeters, and if I would have waited until five, they couldn't have put it in at all because my labor was moving so fast."

A Hysterectomy, the operation at issue in Nancy Vogel's suit, is the second most common surgical procedure for women in America, and obviously a procedure that applies only to women. Here again there is a legitimate medical issue involved in trying to establish uniform standards. For instance, women in the South are nearly twice as likely to undergo a hysterectomy than women in the Northeast. It's hard to think of a medical reason why these rates should be so divergent. Indeed, many gynecologists themselves argue that hysterectomies have often been performed unnecessarily by greedy physicians. "No one knows what the right procedure rate is in this country," says Liliedahl.

Managed-care companies see this medical gray area as a money-making opportunity. Insurers can realize big savings from limiting hospital stays for hysterectomies and even bigger savings by denying approval for the operation. Prudential has achieved the lowest hysterectomy rate, 4.5 per 1,000 subscribers, of the five compa-

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nies rated in Quality Compass, an analysis of managed-care companies. The national rate is 5.5 hysterectomies per 1,000 women, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

But, in cutting costs, are insurers forcing doctors and their patients to accept an inappropriate degree of standardization? Forty-year-old Lynn Mozeliak has been suffering from intense abdominal pain and excessive bleeding during menstrual periods for more than a year. Two gynecologists near her home in Connecticut advised her to have a laparoscopic hysterectomy. Prudential has so far refused to pay for it. The company is offering six months' worth of hormonal therapy that would chemically induce menopause.

I sat in as Mozeliak's gynecologist, Deborah Metzger, debated Prudential's part-time gynecological consultant over how to treat her patient. Through the speaker phone in Metzger's Hartford office, Dr. Stanley Weiner (who has since left the company) insisted that Metzger give hormonal therapy to control her patient's bleeding "before you get a surgical approach." Metzger countered that Mozeliak was "incapacitated by the pain, not the bleeding." "No, the bleeding has to be causing her pain, too," Weiner said. He had never examined Mozeliak. "I'm not arguing with you that she may not need a hysterectomy at some time in the future," he explained, adding, "if this insurance company is willing to embark upon the cost of other treatments prior to resorting to a hysterectomy, why are you fighting it?" "Because the patient is incapacitated right now," Metzger said.

Metzger had already discussed hormonal therapy with her patient. But both decided against it because Mozeliak is diabetic and the potential side effects for her would be risky. "The most frustrating part of my day is dealing with managed care," said Dr. Metzger after the call. When I called Prudential about Mozeliak's case, spokesperson Kevin Heine said he would have someone review the case. Subsequently, a diagnostic laparoscopy was approved, and Mozeliak has recently applied for a partial hysterectomy.

The managed-care guidelines published by Milliman & Robertson are used by health plans that cover more than 50 million Americans. The seven-volume set purports to prescribe the most cost-effective means of handling everything from animal bites to angioplasty. "Volume I: Inpatient and Surgical Care" is an encyclopedia of descriptions of what should happen each day a patient is hospitalized for hundreds of procedures. The book says the post-operative length-of-stay goal for a hysterectomy is two days in the hospital. This happens to be the amount of time for which Pru Care originally offered to cover Nancy Vogel before she argued for the extra half-day.

How did Milliman & Robertson arrive at their notions of how much care patients should receive? One reason doctors bridle at the rules laid down in the company's books is that they were not developed by research scientists in controlled clinical studies but are based instead on "the most efficient practice in advanced managed-care-markets." What this means is that Milliman consultants pore over hospital charts and scan medical literature to find new and cheaper ways of treating patients. If managed-care companies shorten a woman's hospital stay, after which she is not readmitted for treatment of the same problem, the truncated treatment is accepted.

Indeed, Vogel survived her early discharge without major complication. Mozeliak is getting along, albeit with much pain and profuse bleeding. And, of course, there is cheaper pain medication that can be used for labor instead of an epidural. What disturbs some doctors, and their patients, is the feeling that managed care imposes less-than-ideal treatment, and all of its attendant risks, on them—and does so for no reason other than profit. That is why Nancy Vogel sued—not because of what went wrong as a result of her early discharge from the hospital, but because she felt the firm played "Russian roulette" with her and other patients.

Some physicians are covertly rebelling against the managed-care-driven standardization of medicine. Three doctors, in Connecticut, New York, and Washington, D.C., confided in me that they have learned to lie to insurance companies to keep patients experiencing pain from being thrown out of the hospital. "I know the language," explained a physician in D.C., who spoke on condition of anonymity. He knows to write in the record if the patient "hasn't had a bowel movement" or is "febrile" and should not be released.

That doctors lie to protect their patients indicates how powerless they feel as healers. But it is not a long-term solution. Indeed, deception is dangerous. "Creating a false record has huge implications down the road for the patient, her place of employment, the insurance company, and the physician's own profile within the managed-care company," explains Linda Peeno, M.D., an ethicist with the University of Louisville Medical School.

Women experience managed care's reduction of medical services more than men because they seek and need those services more than men. Yet the disparate impact managed care has on women will be difficult to solve through regulation because there appears to be no specific intent to harm women; and the harms, though traumatic and discomforting, are rarely life threatening.

Nonetheless, state legislatures are trying to grapple with the problem. Thirteen states now have mandates protecting mastectomy patients from reduced hospital stays. Seventeen states require health insurance providers to cover breast reconstruction if desired by the patient. Some states have tried to enable patients to sue managed care for medical malpractice if decisions to deny or delay treatment result in injury. Although the first law like this was passed last May in Texas, it is not in effect, pending a court challenge from Aetna. Managed-care companies can only expect further government intervention as more women realize that the medical services they require have been specifically reduced. As a result, the rule makers may be increasingly overruled. •

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Why for-profit medicine couldn't care less.

THE SICK BUSINESS

By Katherine Eban Finkelstein

Massachusetts psychiatrist J. Wesley Boyd is 33 years old, which means that managed care has been a reality for most of his professional life. While Boyd is not particularly happy about how the medical business has evolved in recent years, he's come to accept the fact that the country spends too much on health care—and as a result, he now works under the skeptical eyes of insurance monitors eager to cut costs.

At least that's what he thought until last year. That's when Massachusetts subcontracted coverage of Boyd's indigent patients to a for-profit mental-health HMO, the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership, and Boyd found himself in a maze of bureaucracy. For authorization to treat a patient, he would call the Partnership's voice mail and listen while a chirpy electronic voice walked him through a sprawling options menu. He would punch in confidential information about his patient: birth date, social security number, diagnosis, severity of diagnosis, and the number of therapy sessions he was requesting. The computer would automatically spit back approval and a reference number.

Boyd figured it could be worse: at least the new system would mean less paperwork. But then Boyd opened The Partnership's manual for providers, a hefty, 300-page document. There, in the fine print, Boyd learned that the voice-mail system did not, after all, have the final say over treatment approval. When "authorization treatment requests ... exceed the Outpatient Treatment Authorization Parameters ... the outpatient clinical program will contact the provider to review ... requests." In other words, doctors too generous with the insurance company's money would hear about it and receive additional scrutiny. This contradictory system of authorization and nonauthorization—at a time when Boyd was already cramming in more patients and fighting at every turn to win for them the treatment they needed—drained him of therapeutic energy. "We've been told that the computer will automatically give us a prior approval ... but that all of the computer's decisions are subject to human review. What is the function of the computer?" Boyd laughs darkly. "I'm a shrink, and I can't figure it out."

Boyd's colleagues at Franklin Community Hospital in northern Massachusetts tell similar stories. So do mental health-care professionals nationwide. Indeed, the transformation of mental-health care has become the most visible example of how the rejection of a rationed, government-run health-care system three years ago has produced a rationed, corporate-run system instead. Americans spurned President Clinton's onerous plan of "managed competition," with its regional purchasing pools and presidentially appointed medical overseers reminiscent of the bureaucratic dystopia in the movie *Brazil*, only to inherit the very problems they believed they were escaping: impenetrable red tape, severe limits on patient choice of doctor, loss of privacy, and de facto rationing of care.

Five years ago, few disputed the need for health reform. When the president first proposed his 1993 Health Security Act, the nation was spending 14 percent of gross national product—some $800 billion—on health care, more than one-quarter of it on administrative overhead and marketing by a patchwork of 1,500 insurance companies. Even while spending two to three times more than other Western industrialized nations, the United States came in close to last, alongside Portugal, in basic health indices such as child mortality. And as private employers slashed benefits, 38 million working Americans were left with no health insurance, a number that has grown to 41 million today. Against this grim backdrop, the major question was not whether to reform health care. It was what type of reform, carried out by whom?

Politicians were not ready to engage the career-threatening debates these statistics raised: what to pay for and what to limit; how to define and ensure quality; whether or not to make health care a "right" guaranteed by the federal government. Into that silence stepped the private sector. Corporate lobbies defeated health reform with a $50 million ad campaign that depicted Clinton's plan as one that would eliminate a patient's freedom to choose a doctor, reduce access to care, and create a death star of government bureaucracy. Subsequently, employers came to redefine health reform as a cost-slashing crusade—in which the problems of quality and access would be addressed last. Tens of millions of patients were herded into for-profit managed-care plans,

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which paid capped fees to doctors and to hospitals, rather than pay for each service rendered. Capitalizing on this upheaval, health-care conglomerates launched a series of barely regulated mega-mergers and created private-sector bureaucracies that are as good at denying care as governmental ones are bad at providing it.

While profit-driven medicine has at least temporarily slowed health-care inflation, consumers are increasingly wary of the result. A Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that the number of Americans who thought that for-profit health care was a "good thing" dropped from 20 percent in March to 15 percent by October; by contrast, 47 percent of Americans think for-profit health care is a "bad thing," up from 42 percent in March. This November, Clinton's managed-care advisory commission endorsed a consumer bill of rights which includes both an appeals process if needed care is denied and the repeal of gag clauses that prohibit doctors from disclosing the financial incentives imposed on them by managed care. This could give patients some redress, but decision-making power, and the terms of health reform, still remain in the hands of employers, where quality of care is less important than quantity of profit.

This fact is more apparent in psychiatry. Several years ago, employers and states were desperate to reduce their mental-health expenditures, which had skyrocketed to ten percent of their overall health costs. They also recognized that when behavioral-health problems such as chemical dependency, major depression, and anxiety were undertreated, workers' productivity diminished. Fearing a cost conflagration, employers enlisted what are known as carve-out companies offering comprehensive mental-health benefits at bargain-basement prices. The result, a complete separation between economic concerns and therapeutic standards, lays bare the worst excesses of our profit-driven drift. Too many patients receive perilously substandard care, while costs are shifted indiscriminately back to taxpayers. Meanwhile, frustrated practitioners like Wesley Boyd feel like leaving their profession altogether.

The Partnership's voice-mail system was only one of the barriers between Boyd and his patients. Merit Behavioral Care Corporation, a New Jersey-based company that controls the psychiatric care of 18 million Americans, signed a carve-out deal this spring with Massachusetts Blue Cross/Blue Shield to manage the mental-health benefits of its 650,000 members. When Boyd tried that company's toll-free number, he kept getting put on hold. Merit's contract says it will pick up its 800 number within 30 seconds, and that it will not "abandon" (fail to answer) more than seven percent of the calls it gets each day. "If you're absolutely desperate and you have nowhere to turn, you have to call back," says Boyd. "But even when the calls do get picked up, what happens?"

On Franklin's first-floor inpatient ward, Merit gained a reputation as the most aggressive company in denying authorization requests. "Anytime I call, 'This conversation is being recorded.' They catch you on ways you have of talking about the patient," says Dr. George Patrick, medical director of inpatient psychiatry. "I can say, 'Well, he was suicidal.' 'What do you mean he *was*? That means he doesn't need to be in the hospital.' " Last fall, Boyd says, Merit refused to authorize detox for a heavy drinker, who then became unresponsive and was rushed, comatose, to Franklin's emergency room. Despite the man's condition, Merit still argued that he would best be cared for on an outpatient basis, according to Boyd.

Dr. Richard Surles, director of advanced clinical delivery for Merit, defends his company's approach to treatment decisions: he sees himself not as a rationer, but as a facilitator, ensuring that people get maximum benefits in a time of limited resources. "We don't make medical decisions," he says. "We're making insurance benefit decisions." But Boyd came to view Merit as the most onerous symbol of "capitalism run amok." Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co, the investment firm which also owned RJR Nabisco, had purchased the company in 1995 and placed suicide watches and substance abuse treatment alongside the production of cigarettes and crackers. Boyd, while lost in voice mail or waiting on hold, began to write angry editorials. In one such unpublished tract, he vented, "KKR apparently doesn't care whether it kills people with cigarettes or pretends to give them mental-health care, as long as it turns a profit. Isn't this a bit like the combination veterinarian-taxidermist who promises that either way you get your pet back?"

Actually, "capitalism run amok" was the wrong diagnosis. In a real buyer-beware system, patients would purchase their own health insurance or bargain for health care directly, making their own trade-offs between price and quality. Boyd's patients didn't choose their health plans. The purchasers of their care, and arguably the providers of it, were miles from Franklin.

It is a staple of conservative wisdom that the market will be self-correcting. But in health care, the lack of sufficient regulation has made the system *less* competitive—and thus more costly—by allowing it to become an oligopoly. "The hospital companies are buying managed-care companies, which in turn are buying drug companies, and the drug companies are buying each other," says Robert Boorstin, who worked on Clinton's health-care task force and is a longtime advocate for the mentally ill. "This is going to be like the airplane industry soon. We have two companies that build airplanes, soon to be one."

Mental-health care has seen the most consolidation. If planned mergers go through, the nine behavioral-health companies that dominate today's market will soon collapse into seven. If unimpeded, the largest parent company will be Magellan Health Services Inc., controlled by Richard Rainwater, the leading investor in Columbia/HCA, which is under federal investigation for alleged Medicare billing fraud. (Columbia/HCA says it is conducting its own investigation and cooperating with the federal probe.) Magellan, which owns 90 percent of the nation's psychiatric hospitals and two behavioral-health companies, has recently made a bid to buy one

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more. The new purchases would give Magellan mind-boggling scope: control of 50 million subscribers. (By contrast, one of the largest HMOs, Aetna U.S. Healthcare, controls only 14 million "covered lives.")

Dr. Clarke Ross, executive director of the American Managed Behavioral Healthcare Association, says consolidation works to the consumer's benefit. Employers and patients, he says, are "demanding greater accountability through quality that require capital reserves," which means, in turn, larger companies. But critics are less sanguine, and for good reason: higher costs probably won't be passed on to employers—they'll be passed on to workers. Health-care costs are still growing by eight percent a year, or three times faster than inflation. Yet while health costs to employers decreased last year, by 1.6 percent to $641 billion, the monthly premiums of workers have continued to increase, as much as 21 percent a year at small companies. "Those who have packaged highly fragmented services and captured a revenue stream have made quite a lot of money," says Lawrence Lewin, CEO of The Lewin Group, a health-care consulting firm. "But the benefit of these efficiencies has gone to the packager ... and not to the consumer."

ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY RUSSO FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Consumers pay in other ways, as well. On paper, mental-health costs have dropped from almost ten percent to four percent of employers' overall health budget. In fact, mental-health HMOs have, in some cases, scaled back psychiatric services by 60 percent, estimates James Wrich, CEO of J. Wrich & Associates Inc., which has audited more than 20 managed-behavioral companies. When a real psychiatric problem goes untreated, patients may attempt suicide or injure themselves and wind up in medical emergency rooms, with bills charged to the regular HMOs or the taxpayers. Today, untreated psychiatric problems cost $435 billion, or 40 percent of the nation's entire $1.1 trillion health-care budget, Wrich estimates.

The health-care marketplace is "unorganized, unintegrated, and highly idiosyncratic," says David Lawrence, CEO of Kaiser Permanente, a non-profit HMO. "But for anyone who can begin to organize it, they can make a killing." Merit, for example, has built its business on slashing costs. In 1991, when the company was still called American Biodyne Inc., it won Ohio's mental-health Medicaid contract by promising to reduce costs from $10 million to $7 million. In two years, Biodyne slashed services and spent only $4.7 million of its $14 million contract on patient care, Wrich's audit found. Merit has since won state Medicaid contracts in Tennessee, Iowa, Hawaii, and Pennsylvania. Says Lawrence Marsh, director of equity research for Solomon Brothers Inc., "cost-arbitrageurs have gone to whoever pays for care and said, 'We can help you save money.' "

It's hard to downsize a disease, but behavioral-health companies declare that most patients can be rehabilitated or even cured in a few brief sessions. The Partnership describes its approach as "strength-based"; the company's giant manual explains that "treatment approaches need to focus on the Enrollee's strengths and resources." This can mean an early discharge to family, friends, or church groups, rather than lengthy hospital stays and the heavy use of therapy. Merit advocates "self-care" in the "least restrictive setting." Translation: patient, heal thyself.

Managed care also cuts costs by pressuring doctors to see ever more patients. While the companies say they are merely eliminating waste, psychiatrists consider the new style of treatment a mockery. At one clinic in St. Paul, Minnesota, psychiatrists must see at least six patients an hour. "This includes walking out to the lobby, so maybe you get eight minutes per patient," says Dr. Glenn Pearson, who, in 1991, joined an HMO for idealistic reasons. As he recalls his logic, "I felt like a lawyer trying to increase billable hours. I figured, 'I'll go to an HMO where they care about cost-effective quality care.' " But in 1994, Health Partners ended that idyllic vision when it bought Pearson's small HMO.

"Patients are seeing therapists once a month for three minutes," Pearson explains. The time crunch extends beyond psychiatry. In a Louis Harris & Associates poll this month, seven in ten physicians said that lack of time to spend with patients is a serious problem in their practices. "I am scheduled to see ten entirely new patients a week," Pearson continues, "and I am a part-time employee." Pearson devotes the rest of his time in private practice to treating refugees from the time-limited system. One patient, a physician who suffers from anxiety and depression, consulted Pearson after her behavioral-health company gave her a fifteen-minute consultation with a psychiatrist. In a five-minute follow-up scheduled two months later, she began to weep at the beginning of the session and asked for a glass of water. " 'That's fine,'

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said the shrink, 'but that will use up the rest of your time,' " Pearson recounts. "People now take money out of their own pocket for treatment, which is exactly what the HMOs want."

In 1994, United Behavioral Systems, a mental-health HMO with eleven million members, introduced a protocol for modifying patient behavior and terminating even the most difficult cases within eight sessions. A memo to its nine mental-health clinics in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area explains that the case of any patient needing more than eight sessions will be referred to a supervisory panel. The memo states that the panel's principal question should be: "What needs to happen in order to terminate patient?" Jim Ventrilio, spokesman for United Behavioral Health (formerly UBS), says the "intent of the memo was to identify cases that need supervision. There is no set number of face-to-face visits we will or won't authorize."

Another cost-cutting method is to promote the heavy use of anti-depressant medications, which are cheaper than time with the doctor. Mental-health insurers generally reimburse talk-therapy at $125 an hour, while they cover visits for managing medication at a more lucrative $75 per 20-minute visit, according to James Wrich. Patients who want to continue medication after their allotted sessions are referred to their primary care doctors for prescriptions—thus shifting the anti-depressant drug costs to the medical-surgical HMOs.

And what does such stripped-down care mean for those who receive it? Bryant Welch, a Washington, D.C., attorney and clinical psychologist, says that 30 to 40 percent of his law practice's clients are the parents of dead children, who were denied access to needed psychiatric services by behavioral-health companies. One 13-year-old boy with severe adjustment problems insured by Green Spring Health Services was denied admission to a residential facility. Instead, he was treated for two days in a Green Spring network hospital and discharged against his doctor's recommendation. Ten days later, he stole his mother's car, drove down a slippery road, crashed into an embankment, and was killed instantly.

Green Spring denied residential care because the boy had not cooperated with outpatient treatment, says Welch. Yet noncooperation is the clinical symptom that warrants admission to residential care. Green Spring's posture seemed to be that if employers and insurers are expected to pay, then patients should be expected to participate in their cure (an implausible standard when applied to mental illness). A Baltimore lawyer for Green Spring, E. Dale Adkins, responds, "these allegations are not true. The young man was not discharged based on any decision by Green Spring to withold care. We really believe that when this case is tried, it will be clear that this terrible accident wasn't caused by any decision of Green Spring." Citing medical confidentiality, he declined to discuss the case's details.

Denying care to uncooperative patients is what Kaiser Permanente CEO David Lawrence describes as a "three-story walk-up selection process in a non-elevator building." It provides care to the healthiest patients, those who can climb stairs, and denies care to the sickest. Such risk-aversion is the primal force of a profit-driven system, says Jim Tallon, president of the United Hospital Fund, a health-care philanthropy and research organization: "The best way to make a buck in insurance is to sell it to healthy people." Insurers faced with chronic or incurably ill patients must either suck up the cost or weed them out. Patient advocates feared the Clinton plan would distort the risk pool, turning government-run alliances into sick-ghettos, and employer plans into suburbs for the healthy. The profit-driven system has not only exacerbated this problem, but until recently, disregarded oversight mechanisms such as report cards on quality.

Because psychotherapy is a somewhat nebulous science, insurers have been able to argue that ultra-brief treatment empowers patients. The idea was first popularized by two psychiatrists, S.H. Budman and A.S. Gurman, in a 1988 book, *The Theory and Practice of Brief Therapy*. They argued that time-limited therapy can empower patients by teaching them how to solve one small problem, thus giving them a model of how to solve all problems on their own. Not surprisingly, the behavioral-health industry has used the study to legitimate an average of eight to twelve therapy sessions per patient. In a quality report card published this September, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill flunked all nine companies that use this approach. Overall, the companies failed in every quality category, from not treating suicide as an emergency to not providing adequate hospitalization.

"Perceived quality," managed care's new buzzword, is the industry's latest response to growing public dissatisfaction. From his Park Ridge, New Jersey office, Dr. Richard Surles is thinking about how to improve Merit Behavioral's 800 number. Since its founding in 1993, the company underwent six mergers and acquisitions and grew with each ownership change. More than 1,000 companies and HMOs now subcontract Merit, with its stable of 36,000 therapists, to provide cost-effective mental-health care to 18 million employees and subscribers. The downside of this growth is instability, a roster of doctors which changes constantly and services which vary across the country. "We have to have national consistency around our intake of phone calls," Surles says. He vows to hold his company to a "corporate standard" and to reduce by two percent the number of "abandoned" phone calls.

This is typical for the industry, in which companies are using service-industry techniques to buoy customer satisfaction. In Minneapolis, Health Partners took Dr. Glenn Pearson's department on a three-day retreat to lecture the staff on improving perceived quality. Despite eight-minute therapy sessions and three-month waits for follow-ups, the company drilled the doctors on returning calls quickly and being pleasant on the phone. Pearson recalls that the analogy used was that of the airline business, another industry swept by consolidation: what frequent travelers really care about is having a pleasant

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flight attendant and getting their luggage quickly.

But the companies aren't doing much to establish standards for quality, access, and choice of care—and attempts to do so from the outside have not had much impact. In 1991, with employers beginning to ask what, in fact, they were buying, a non-profit organization, the National Committee for Quality Assurance, began reviewing and accrediting HMOs under a rigorous set of medical standards. In June the organization began including behavioral-health programs in this survey. While the most responsible employers, like Xerox and Ford, have stuck to the NCQA's findings and broken off contracts with health plans that fail review, accreditation is still voluntary, and only half of the country's 630 plans submit to the process. "We spend $1 trillion a year on health care and accountability has been very primitive," says NCQA president Margaret O'Kane. "We've looked for the ax-murderers and the worst offenders."

Meanwhile, most consumers remain utterly powerless. According to a recent health-insurance survey by the Commonwealth Fund and the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, 52 percent of employees are offered no choice of managed-care plans by their employers; 17 percent of employees are offered no health benefits at all. So even if they had data about different health plans, most patients couldn't make choices based on it anyway. According to Paul Starr, a sociology professor at Princeton and a Pulitzer Prize-winning health-care writer, the plans with higher quality ratings in national accreditation studies don't necessarily get more patients. As employers choose benefits, low cost, generally offered by the largest companies, remains the greatest predictor of enrollment.

And the large HMOs that undergo mergers tend to have characteristics associated with lower quality plans, according to a 1996 study on markets and plan performance by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health. Such organizations tend to be dominated by a distant and bureaucratic parent company and have a high turnover in management. Starr views the fact that size and low cost are rewarded, instead of quality, as more evidence that the market is neither free nor competitive: "In a functioning marketplace, greater attention to quality should produce a reward." Initially, managed-care companies may create efficiencies and negotiate discounts, and still provide generous services. But after consolidating, the only remaining way to boost profits is to limit choice and to reduce access and quality.

An 80-year-old Florida retiree risked learning this the hard way when his HMO recommended an orchiectomy (castration) for his slow-growing prostate cancer. His son-in-law, a New York physician named Steven Stern, made some calls and discovered that standard treatment—based on a widely respected Veterans Administration study—is administration of anti-hormonal drugs, followed by tests. When he confronted the Florida HMO doctor, he was told, "'We don't do it that way in Florida.'" Stern did more research, and called back again. After a protracted discussion, Stern says, the Florida doctor admitted that because the tests cost $118 every three months, the HMO's policy was to cut off the patient's testicles instead.

This September, three big non-profit HMOs, including Kaiser Permanente, joined consumer groups to call for legally enforceable national standards and were denounced by their industry. "You can develop a consensus if you have credible experts. But they don't want standards that are accountable and concrete," says Dr. Steven Schaeffer, chairman of otolaryngology at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. If such standards existed, then HMOs could no longer refuse coverage by redefining medical necessity on a case-by-case basis, or simply being unreachable by phone to define it. Last year, Dr. Schaeffer proposed to Oxford Health Plans that he help the company publish a newsletter on its criteria for approving surgery. "They were like, 'I've got this crazy guy on the other line,'" says Schaeffer. The company turned down his offer, and retained an impenetrable voice-mail system with clerk gate-keepers.

In June, the Partnership was brought into this melee of buying and selling, when Columbia/HCA made a play for Value Behavioral Inc., one of the Partnership's two parent companies. State antitrust law would have prohibited the deal, which would have given the Partnership, in effect, a stake in hospitals providing treatment to Medicaid patients. Value solved this problem by selling the Partnership to the other parent corporation; the Columbia/HCA deal went through.

Last fall, some 200,000 psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers brought an $11 billion antitrust lawsuit against the nine biggest behavioral-health companies, accusing them of fixing prices and profiting from patient misery. The case is based, in part, on the 1995 publication of an article in a managed-behavioral industry trade journal. In the article, two senior executives of Value proposed that behavioral-health companies with "highly controlled referral processes" fix universal rates for services. "[I]mplementing universal rates for psychotherapy is one way to thin out a network that has grown too large ... universal rates will force a regression to the mean, yielding fewer professionals willing to accept the stipulated fees," they write. Clarke Ross, of the American Managed Behavioral Healthcare Association, points to a magistrate's report from July, advising dismissal of the lawsuit. Whether or not the sitting judge accepts that recommendation, one lawsuit will not change the underlying structure that favors business over consumers. "If anyone thinks this consolidation is going to lead to better prices for consumers," says Joe Sahid, attorney for the plaintiffs, "they're crazy."

According to a recent survey of mental-health professionals, one in five therapists is taking active steps to leave his profession because of the changes wrought by behavioral-health companies. This spring, Dr. Wesley Boyd called a realtor. He rented a small suite of offices in downtown Greenfield, near Franklin hospital. He packed up his laptop computer and his books, and started a private practice. He will take no insurance. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Around the World

Probably Roberto Rossellini started it. In 1945 he began shooting *Open City*, about the German occupation of Rome, almost immediately after the German forces had left the city. Whenever I see the film, I wonder how Romans reacted to the making of it. How did it feel to see their ghastly sufferings acted out so soon afterward in the very streets where their families and friends had been killed?

Since Rossellini, other directors have slipped into the still-shaking streets of recent wars—Pontecorvo with *The Battle of Algiers*, Schlöndorff with *Circle of Deceit* (in Lebanon). Now there is **Welcome to Sarajevo** (Miramax), done by Michael Winterbottom, director of *Jude*. He moved into the ravaged Bosnian city with false rifle fire and false explosions very soon after the Dayton Peace Accords were signed.

Again I had the *Open City* curiosity: How did Sarajevans feel about the mimicking of horrors they had just endured? And I felt another pressure, fetched far perhaps, but present: the obligation of this film to be worthy of this near-exploitation of recent horror. With Rossellini, the problem didn't exist. The subject was hell, brought to you by people who had been there. Since all of the principal actors were artists of some caliber, their art helped to make the film both a pronouncement and a memorial.

Not quite the same with Winterbottom's film. The war is not scanted: the devastation and butchery are there. (Though Winterbottom said he had to hurry his filming schedule because the city was cleaning up the havoc.) But the screenplay by Frank Cottell Boyce, based on a non-fiction account by Michael Nicholson, is thin, sentimental. It centers on the rescue of a small girl by an English journalist, who takes her to live with his family in London, and the efforts of her none-too-attentive mother to get her back. Woven around this mere heart-tug story—"mere" seems the right word in this infernal setting—are the lives of correspondents, including a flashy American played by Woody Harrelson. Sometimes they make us feel that they rely on the world to boil up bloodshed for them to keep them in subject matter. Some of them "collect" wars like connoisseurs.

A formal mimesis takes over in **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil** (Warner Brothers). As thousands and thousands of readers know by now, it's set in Savannah, and much is made of the manners and mannerisms of that city. Chat, digression, seizing of the moment because it's just as good to seize as anything else—this meandering apparently shapes lives in Savannah; and, mimetically, the film meanders, too.

John Berendt's book, which the flap copy specifies is not a novel, has been shaped for the screen by John Lee Hancock, with some alterations but with no intrusive efficiency. There are pools of conversation, ambling detours, just as in the book, while, just as in the book, a murder story is traced out. Oddly enough, the murder is made more icy by contrast with the purring context of the rest of the film.

A writer, played by John Cusack, comes down from New York to do a magazine piece about a famous annual party given by a wealthy Savannah gent, Kevin Spacey. Cusack meets a young woman, Alison Eastwood (daughter of the director); Spacey meets a corpse; and all of us meet some of the graces, kinks, charms, and prides of the city. Though sex and blood are integral to the narrative, its hallmark is its absence of rush, its waystops in a midnight cemetery, its eccentrics, its parties.

Two aspects stand out. Clint Eastwood is not the first person we might think of to direct a film of leisurely pace, concerned with ghosts and a transvestite. But he showed with *The Bridges of Madison County* that laconic action films are not his only province, and he is entirely comfortable with this quite nonlaconic material that has very little physical action. His directing ability is keeping up with his extension of interests.

Then there's Kevin Spacey, who grows before our eyes. In his first few film appearances he was not particularly impressive because his face is so determinedly unremarkable. He is neither handsome nor distinguished: he just has the usual features arranged in the usual order. He worked his way into better parts, in such films as *A Time to Kill* and *L.A. Confidential*, and has become, though at a lower level, an American counterpart of Ralph Richardson. The early Richardson face was a semi-pathetic blob, but as he got better parts, we could see that the very ordinariness of his face was a sort of negative asset. It was pleasant to see so much force and ingenuity coming from that

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Amistad. *In 1839, a shipload of mutinied slaves is tried in the U.S.—to determine whether they shall be freed or returned to their owners. A splendid cast, under Steven Spielberg's accomplished direction. (Reviewed 12/22/97)* **The Sweet Hereafter.** *A town haunted by the loss of many of its children in a bus accident. Ian Holm as a lawyer who tries to help. Clean, sharp, strong. (12/8/97)* **Will It Snow for Christmas?** *Life on a French farm, with a strong mother and her seven children. We share their lives. (12/15/97)* **The Wings of the Dove.** *Two of Henry James's three principal characters are well depicted, and the atmosphere is excellent. (12/1/97)* **—SK**

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nonactorish being. Spacey is not—not yet, anyway—in the Richardson league, but every appearance makes his face more and more welcome. It seems to say, "Oh, you think good actors have to look impressive. Watch this."

Godard's influence is alive and well and living in Australia. **Kiss or Kill** (October), directed by Bill Bennett, uses jump cuts so continuously that it's almost as if Bennett were boasting of his lineage.

Godard is not just in the editing, however. The screenplay, by Bennett, is about a criminal pair of lovers who hit the road after a scam they pull on a visiting businessman results, accidentally, in his death. The pair are followed by two detectives and a former sports star. The star is anxious because the lovers have sexually incriminating tapes of him that they stole from the businessman. The Godardian editing suits perfectly the Godardian moral anarchism of *Breathless* and *Pierrot-le-Fou*—and Bennett.

Unfortunately, the two lovers are somewhat less interesting than the two detectives following them, who at least have some humor. Still, Bennett's screenplay is consistent, completely concerned with the haphazard and the jogging of conventional expectation. Most of the characters' attempts at logic turn out terribly, and the ending of the film is not at all what we might expect.

Bennett may not be making a moral statement about conduct in the world, but he is clearly making one about film. To enter a film, *Kiss or Kill* seems to say, is to invoke a passport to a peculiar modern fantasy land. The more veristic the detail, the less obligation to moral verism. In this Bennett goes past the postwar nonchalance of Godard; he implies that the aesthetics of MTV can be translated into ethics. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Ivanov Revisited

Ivanov, Anton Chekhov's first full-length drama, was written (when the author was 27) in ten days, and revised for the next 14 years. Chekhov's original exhilaration over having composed a play "without a single villain or angel in it" was followed—in keeping with his customary dejection (or modesty) regarding his own dramatic work—by extreme dissatisfaction with *Ivanov*, despite its success on the Russian stage. He called it an abortion, a dramatic miscarriage, and sardonically renamed it "Bolvanov" (or "Blockhead").

Both of these assessments were correct. *Ivanov* is a ruined masterpiece, a wonderful mess. It reveals all of Chekhov's masterly control of character, his uncanny ability to transform the most desperate situations into comedy, and his sardonic sense of the wastefulness of Russian life. At the same time, it is the most artificial of his plays, not to mention the most explicit. Each of the first three acts ends with a melodramatic flourish, including an interrupted love scene later to be recycled into *Uncle Vanya*. And the last act ends with the hero's death on stage by suicide (in an earlier version, by heart attack) as he "runs aside" and puts a bullet through his brain. All of Chekhov's plays employ the conventions of melodrama, but in the later ones at least he managed to keep the bloodier stuff in the wings.

In style, *Ivanov* is neither comedy, tragedy, nor drama, but tragi-comical satire. It has often been noted that the hero bears a generic name like John Doe, suggesting that Chekhov intended him to be more representative than realistic. Ivanov is meant to be typical of those indecisive liberal intellectuals who had lost their faith in social progress after the failure of Alexander II's reforms. Such characters were being idolized on the Russian stage at the time as Slavic Hamlets, objects of sympathy and concern. Chekhov was eager to explode this Romantic myth. For him, the Ivanov type was not pitiable or heroic, he was ludicrous and absurd. He lacked what was for Chekhov a crucial component, the most precious element in the human periodic table, namely "iron in the blood."

Ivanov nevertheless emerges as the most attractive figure in the play. By comparison with him, everyone else is small of spirit and bankrupt of imagination, particularly the moralistic Doctor Lvov, who holds a single, often simple-minded view of Ivanov. Everyone does, in fact. Ivanov is serially characterized as a charlatan, a Tartuffe, a ne'er-do-well, a callous monster, an anti-Semite, an object for rehabilitation—anything but what he is, a neurotic intellectual whose spiritual threads are fraying at the seams.

However Ivanov is regarded, whether as a subject for satire, patronization, or contempt, he remains the character most percipient about his own defects. He anatomizes his sins and failings, spitting out insults and blurting out remorse, in arias of elegiac self-recrimination that are later to be recomposed by O'Casey (in *Shadow of a Gunman*), O'Neill (in *A Touch of the Poet*), Osborne (in *Epitaph for George Dillon*), and other troubadours of chronic self-hatred. When Ivanov asks the alcoholic clown Lebedev what's wrong with him, his friend replies that it's his environment that's killing him. Ivanov rejects this as a cliché, but it is very close to the truth. He is the first of Chekhov's superior men (Astrov is another) to find himself curdling in a shiftless, mindless, backbiting provincial society.

He seems, in fact, to be suffering from what we now call clinical depression. (Having no Prozac in his black bag, Doctor Lvov prescribes self-reformation.) "I lack the strength to lift myself up," he says of his condition, and later, "I'm too lazy to walk to that door and you talk of America." He is suffering from a spiritual hernia, the result of hoisting too many ambitious hopes and expectations. Now he is in the grip of indolence, lassitude, indifference, and spiritual anomie. If his past was filled with energy and excitement, his present is vacuous and dull. And he feels like an exile in a mean little province very much like Chekhov's own Taganrog, populated with miserly gossips, scheming stewards, card-playing nitwits, immature young girls, fortune-hunting aristocrats, and title-hunting widows. His marriage to Anya Petrovna, who is suffering from consumption, has soured. In an uncontrolled moment, he tells her she's dying and refers scornfully to her Jewish origins. (Chekhov himself, though he admired Jews, was not above calling them "Yids.") And now he is being pursued by the young heiress Sasha, who wants to reform him for her own romantic purposes. His only active moment in the play is when he takes his own life, presumably to save Sasha from an ill-advised marriage. It is a false moment. In real life, he probably would have married the girl and repeated all his old patterns.

The Lincoln Center production of *Ivanov* at the Vivian Beaumont stays safely and comfortably within the confines of domestic comedy. It is well designed by John Lee Beatty (sets) and Catherine Zuber (costumes), and it has been directed with precise attention to detail by Gerald Gutierez. It can also boast some fine performances, notably Marian Seldes's Zinaida, a beautifully etched portrait of a woman too mean

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Dido in the Underworld

Burned once, a body can't be burned again.
A filigree of ash will ascertain
there's simply no more flesh to sacrifice.
The underworld's a fine and private place,
just like the dark and lonely interior
of love. She will not speak. She will ignore
entreaties as she directs her scalding gaze
onto a salamander, not ablaze,
that weeps its wondrous liquid at her feet,
a blind and lungless creature, also mute.

SIDNEY WADE

and miserly to provide her guests with anything more nourishing than gooseberry jam; William Preston's mute servant Gavrila (a rough sketch for Firs in *The Cherry Orchard*), a diminutive and ancient actor on spindly legs who can express more with his eyebrows than most actors do with their voice boxes; and, preeminently, Max Wright's Dickensian Lebedev, a sleepy, whinnying, self-deprecating rural councillor with a nose like a sweet potato and a heart as big as Mother Russia. Wright's use of his hands alone could constitute a lesson in comic acting.

Other performances are solid enough, notably Hope Davis's ethereal Sasha, Tom McGowan's athletic Borkin, Jayne Atkinson's languorous Anna Petrovna, Jeff Weiss's bridge-besotted Kosykh, Lynn Cohen's gossipy Avdotya, and Judith Hawking's buxom Babakina (the title-hunting widow). But Rob Campbell as the Alceste-like Doctor Lvov acts like a refugee from a Tom Cruise buddy movie, and Robert Foxworth as the indigent Count Shabyelski doesn't cough up enough of the self-hating acid emanating from the heart of a decent aristocrat in the throes of bartering his self-respect for a widow's fortune.

Most damaging of all, there's a hole in the center. I defer to no one in my respect for Kevin Kline's abilities as a comic character actor, and I am full of gratitude for his willingness to take on taxing stage roles when he could be increasing his equities in Hollywood. But he doesn't seem to be paying enough of the price that must be exacted for playing a soul in hell. His anguish is expressed but not felt. Very little proceeds from his interior. The performance is intelligent, carefully worked out, and dynamic, but it lacks an important component—depth of feeling. Likewise, the staging of his suicide, with Ivanov shooting himself almost by accident, and the rest of the characters shutting the doors on his body, struck me as artificial.

I am of two minds about David Hare's adaptation. He has modernized the text considerably, sometimes, particularly with Lebedev's lines, to rich comic effect. ("Zinaida, here is your money, drop dead!" "To this bulbous old nose, the marriage smells wrong," "I feel like I'm living in the skull of a demented skunk.") But the elegy at the heart of the play seems to have become unheard music. The self-lacerating soliloquies don't resound with sufficient mournfulness. The pity of it is gone. And while it is probably sensible to upgrade Ivanov's age from 35 to 46 in order to accommodate Kevin Kline's middle years, that change diminishes the sense of loss one should feel over the untimely suicide of a gifted man.

Still, this is a presentable *Ivanov*, if not a memorable one. There is a wholly realized society on the stage, engaged in some splendid comic turns. The production may not persuade you that *Ivanov* belongs in the pantheon of Chekhov's great mature plays, but it reveals enough of the writer's human and artistic qualities to make you happy in his company.

Well, perhaps happy is the wrong word. *Ivanov* is Chekhov's most hopeless play. It lacks his later panacea for despair—namely, devotion to work. In depicting how enthusiasm is quickly followed by fatigue, he comes as close here to the brink of nihilism as anywhere in his writings, and only his warm humanity keeps him from falling over the edge.

I am duty bound to report on a couple of the musicals that have recently opened on Broadway to mixed reviews. The first is *Side Show* (Richard Rodgers Theatre), a *Singspiel* about the Hilton sisters. These girls were a pair of Siamese twins who, after a career in carnival, became vaudeville stars during the earlier decades of this century. *Side Show* features a pumped-up score, an irrelevant light show, Busby Berkeley dance routines, a pallid love plot, and two actresses in identical clothes and blond wigs who play the Hilton sisters as if they were posing for a Doublemint ad—imagine Betty Grable and June Lockhart joined at the hip. Each of these women has a suitor. Actually, one of them has two, including a black man who responds to her indifference by singing "If I can see past your affliction, why can't you see past mine?" (!) This sister eventually gets married—and the only thing that kept me sitting in my seat was wondering how the happy couple were going to make it together in bed. I'm sure I wasn't alone in these prurient interests. *Side Show* struck me as a jaded entertainment designed to stir the waning attention of a sensation-hungry audience.

At the Royale Theatre sits *Triumph of Love*, a phrase that might have been equally appropriate as a subtitle for *Side Show*. Actually, it's a musical adaptation of an eighteenth-century comedy by Marivaux. It's quite winning, if you don't mind being treated to Broadway winks and nudges. There is no question that the show is exquisite to look at. That fine set designer Heidi Ettinger has provided a glittering act curtain seemingly made out of 14-karat gold threads and swathed over the stage like a huge throw rug. It rises (with applause) to reveal a colorful topiary garden of plants and shrubs shaped in the form of hearts and spades, and washed with the gorgeous palette of Paul Gallo's lighting. Finally, Catherine Zuber's rich costumes, all in bold primary colors, provide a sumptuous elegance to the playing card set.

Marivaux's play is about the triumph of sensual love over sterile philosophy among a number of aristocrats trying to cultivate their intellectual gardens. The manipulation of the various romantic plots is accomplished with a certain cruelty and ruthlessness, particularly on the part of the heroine, a princess in disguise who is willing to break at least two other hearts in order to satisfy her own. Marivaux's hard-edged qualities have been preserved in the amusing if sometimes glib adaptation of James Magruder, and the music and lyrics of Jeffrey Stock and Susan Birkenhead are often quite appealing. Moreover, the show, directed within an inch of its life by Michael Mayer, features some sharp performances, including the subtle minimalist underplaying of F. Murray Abraham as the philosopher Hermocrates, the po-faced acting of smoky-voiced Betty Buckley as Hesione his spinster sister, two amusing *commedia* recreations by Kevin Chamberlin and Roger Bart as Dimas the gardener and Harlequin the gardener, a cameo soubrette from Nancy Opel as the maidservant Corine, and Nelson Eddy and Jeannette Macdonald turns by Christopher Sieber and Susan Egan as the romantic couple, Agis and Princess Léonide.

The Triumph of Love has been Broadwayized, to be sure, with some outrageous puns and a few wiseacre asides. But once you accept the updating conventions, it can provide some pleasures. For one thing, the show is totally unpretentious, full of mockery, and rippling with good nature. And its moral—that, however rational and controlled people pretend to be, they can't suppress their

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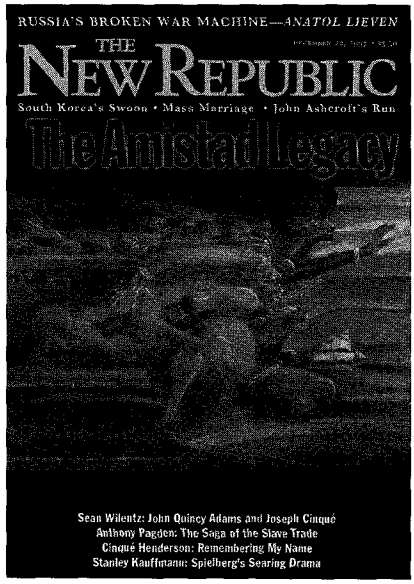
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appetites and emotions—might have brought an approving smile to the face of Monsieur de Molière. Purists may cavil, but the spirit of Marivaux has been preserved, joined to the robust tradition of American vaudeville. The evening is worth a visit if only to see F. Murray Abraham peering solemnly at his watch, then adjusting the hands of his sun dial, or Betty Buckley making an entrance in a huge white wig topped by a fully rigged Spanish galleon. •

The noisy pluralism of Indian fiction.

An Indelicate Balance

BY JAMES WOOD

Macaulay, who said that "a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India," has been paid back for his ignorant denigration of Indian literature; he has been pelted with masterpieces. His punishment has taken a form which he could not have imagined, the vivid prosperity of an Indian literature, and a Pakistani literature, written in Macaulay's own language. Even better, this revenge has not been vengeful. Indian fiction in English is marked by its ambiguous gratitude for an English fictional tradition which, being an intellectual colony only, could freely instruct it. (Sterne, Austen, and Dickens have been the obvious English influences.) Having lent itself, English fiction now receives the alms of Indian writing, which has enriched the English novel in the last 20 years. Indeed, so strong is the influence of Salman Rushdie's Dickensianism that it has reinfected the English novel with a boisterous (and sometimes overwhelming) Dickensianism. English writing has had to learn, from India, how to go native in its own land.

The two main streams of Indian fiction in English, traditional and modernist, begin at almost the same time, in the mid-1930s. This was when R.K. Narayan, India's greatest novelist, published his first book, and Raja Rao, India's first true modernist, produced *Kanthapura* (1938), a somewhat overwrought and willed book. By the 1960s, literary English appeared to be fading in India. The national government had decided to establish Hindi as the official language. V.S. Naipaul announced (hardly for the first time) that Indian writing in English was finished. But the steady growth of English as a world-language, and the appearance of Indian and Pakistani writers in Britain and Canada and the United States, began to repair this decline in the early 1980s.

The real reason, however, was Rushdie. He is central to the new power of Indian fiction in English, so dominating that he has gobbled up his predecessors, who now seem like clouds to his sun. It says much for Rushdie's powers of supercession that G.V. Desani's highly verbal, punning, and wheezy book, *All About H. Hatterr* (1948), whose influence Rushdie has admitted to, now reads like Rushdie's poor relation.

Midnight's Children, which appeared in 1981, inaugurated a new period in both Indian and Pakistani writing. Even those writers who do not at all resemble Rushdie, such as Vikram Seth, run the risk of having their difference look like avoidance. Rushdie's verbal games, his occasionally programmatic hysteria, his postmodernist's faith in numbers (many stories defeat the One Big Bad Story), his jubilant powers of caricature, his tendency toward giantism (the novel must speak for the whole Indian subcontinent, and thus for history)—all these qualities, for better and for worse, can be found in contemporary Indian literature, and in the pages of *Mirrorwork*, Rushdie's anthology of Indian writing since independence. This book, and Arundhati Roy's good and flawed *The God of Small Things*, which is a perfect child of Rushdie's, offer a picture of what Indian writing looks like today.

The God of Small Things
by Arundhati Roy
(Random House, 321 pp., $23)

Mirrorwork:
50 Years of Indian Writing, 1947-1997
edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West
(Henry Holt/Owl Books, 553 pp., $15)

A Dragonfly in the Sun: An Anthology of Pakistani Writing in English
edited by Muneeza Shamsie
(Oxford University Press, 599 pp., $65)

The most obvious quality of the best Indian writers is their love of comedy. On deeper inspection, however, this comedy does not look at all obvious. For one thing, it is often extremely formal, staged, and literary. Consider this sentence by Naipaul (who asked to be omitted from Rushdie and West's anthology): "When he got home, he mixed and drank some Maclean's Brand Stomach Powder, undressed, got into bed and read some Epictetus." This is about Mr. Biswas, who dreams, in Trinidad, of greater things. We might suspect the sentence of being Indian for a number of reasons: the particular comedy of the brand name suggests a certain alienation from those brand names: they are precisely, foreign. The pairing of Maclean's Stomach Powder and Epictetus encourages us to see the latter in the light of the former—as a higher-class brand name, equally imported, and equally essential (both products receive Naipaul's quantifying "some"). What is most remarkable about Naipaul's sentence is that it is at once highly calculated—the control of the teetering mock-heroic, the saving of "Epictetus" until the last word—and deeply touching. Biswas is being lightly mocked for his peripheral, Trinidadian aspirations; but in some way Epictetus, a classical powder for the mind, is being mocked too, mocked for his impossible rectitude, his irrelevance. That is, Naipaul sees Biswas from outside, but also sees things from inside Biswas.

This doubleness, a forgiving mockery, is the compound eye of all great literary comedy. Something like it can be found in much Indian writing, and is undoubtedly facilitated by the particular doubleness of India's own cultural situation, both proud and peripheral (to the English center). It is no accident, perhaps, that Indian comedy often resembles Russian comedy of the nineteenth century, which likewise dramatizes a kind of immodest modesty, a humble nationalism. Many of Narayan's finest comic creations have a delightful mixture of uncertainty and arrogance. The writer inserts himself at the soft junction of these conflicting feelings, as Naipaul does with Mr. Biswas, and may then laugh at both his character and at the culture to which he aspires. The writer, miraculously, is neither at the center nor at the periphery, but always moving between the two, both for and against his characters.

A fine example of this is Vikram Seth's mockery of the Anglophile "brown sahibs" in *A Suitable Boy* (an extract of which appears in *Mirrorwork*). Through-

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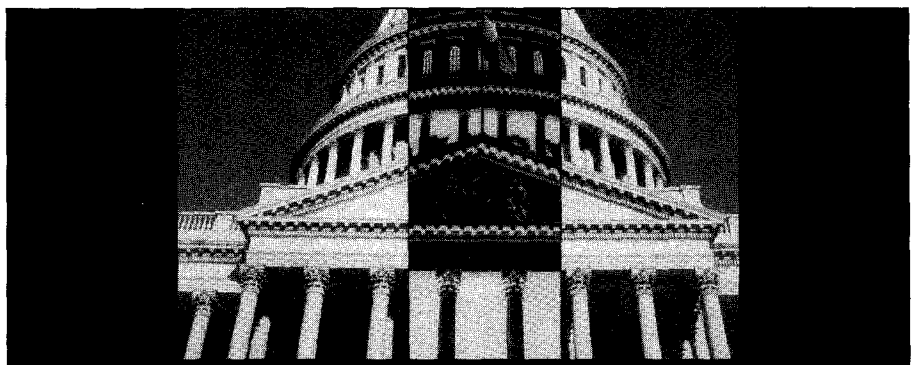
out Seth's novel, Arun and his wife Meenakshi are seen with disdain and affection: Meenakshi, with her fondness for daring saris and weekly canasta at the Shady Ladies Club, and Arun, who lies about his familiarity with London shops ("Hamley's toy shop ... it's on Regent Street, not far from Jaeger's.") During the war, Seth tells us, Arun would listen to Churchill's speeches on the radio, "and murmur, as he had heard the English murmur, 'Good old Winnie.' " As in *A House for Mr Biswas*, the aspirations of the periphery and the irrelevance of the center are both mocked.

A proof of this gentleness is found in Indian fiction's fondness for absurd names. In his novel, Seth enjoys informing us about the "Bony Bespectacled Bannerji Barristers (as that famous family of lawyers was known in Brahmpur)." In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie introduces the Parsi financial house of Cashondeliveri, and their three eligible sons, Lowjee Lowerjee Cashondeliveri, Jamibhoy Lifebhoy Cashondeliveri, and Jamsheed Cashondeliveri. Arundhati Roy tells us about Dr. Verghese Verghese, "Kottayam's leading Pediatrician and Feeler-Up of Mothers," about "Comrade E. M. S. Namboodiripad," and makes us see this sign: "For V. D. Sex complaints contact Dr. O. K. Joy." That someone's name can be pointlessly ridiculed tells us, in effect, that only his name is being ridiculed: the very unearnedness of the joke suspends the moral. Unlike English fiction, with its tendency to use names as moral descriptions—Knightley, Steerforth, the Smallweeds, Becky Sharp—Indian fiction in English often uses the name as a means of outwitting quick moral judgments. As in Russian fiction, to be the bearer of a clumsy name which is only clumsy, and means no more than its clumsiness, invites a certain brutal sympathy.

The great pleasure of *The God of Small Things* flows from its language, and its delight in verbal comedy. This is true of all the major Indian fiction. Language is the playground of its politics. Language has always been the real theme of Indian fiction, ever since Rao Raja's *Kanaputha*. Prefiguring Rushdie, G. V. Desani subjected English to luxurious excruciations: "Only a few years ago, Master Keeper, I was sitting in my humble belle-vue-no-view, cul-de-sack-the-tenant, a landlady's Up-and-do-'em opportunity apartment-joint in India." Naipaul in his early novels, and in our time Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Amit Chaudhuri have all shown an exquisite sensitivity to the varied and fragile ripenesses of different linguistic registers. Indian writers, aware that they possess, in English, only a narrow wealth in a country with at least 12 other official languages, are unusually alert to the language's comic degradation.

And they are stranded, perhaps, in the linguistic dimension of things. There is a strong mimetic urge to capture, on the page, the music of accents and dialects. A paradox may be involved here, for at times the Indian writer will turn a native language into English, and then deliberately mangle the English in an attempt at capturing the original, native lapses. Something like this occurs in *Such A Long Journey*, Rohinton Mistry's excellent first novel. (Mistry is represented by a story in *Mirrorwork*.) In that novel, Mistry's hero complains to a tea-stall trader that his teacup is dirty. The trader replies: "You are absolutely telling the truth. But why worry, in one second it will be clean." In his bold but ultimately tiresome novel, *The Last Burden*, Upamanyu Chatterjee presents a madcap family which speaks a painfully jumbled and arrhythmic language, of puns and gags: "To you, in a Hindi movie, tweeting the tropes of intimacy, is more moving than your sinking mother." Chatterjee's family is apparently speaking Bengali, here rendered into English.



WHY PEOPLE DON'T TRUST GOVERNMENT

EDITED BY
JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.
PHILIP D. ZELIKOW
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Confidence in American government has been declining for three decades. Three-quarters of Americans said they trusted the Federal government to do the right thing in 1964. Today, only a quarter do. Why the decline? This book of essays by leading Harvard scholars explores the roots of mistrust. It first examines government's current scope, its actual performance, and citizens' perceptions of its performance. It then assesses many possible explanations that have been offered for the decline of trust. Mistrust, the contributors find, is largely unrelated to national economic conditions, to challenges of a global economy, to the Cold War, or to bumbling bureaucrats and venal politicians. Rather, they show that it is an interacting blend of cultural and political conflicts stirred by an increasingly corrosive news media.

JOSEPH S. NYE, JR. is Dean of the Faculty and Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. **PHILIP D. ZELIKOW** and **DAVID C. KING** are Associate Professors of Public Policy, also at the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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The oddity, the pressure, of representing native Indian lapses in the old colonial language, and thereby turning it into a recognizable English form, that of the comedy of dialect (one thinks of the "thee" and "thy" in George Eliot), is alive in all this fiction. At times, the heated politics of the gesture obstructs the comedy; this was surely the case in *The Satanic Verses*. Arundhati Roy nicely circumvents this problem of explicitness, for her novel is about children, in particular about restless and inventive English-speaking twins, Rahel (a girl) and Estha (a boy). Unwisely, her language has been called Joycean and Faulknerian, and even Tiger Woodsian by John Updike. (It swings?) But it is not Joycean, though it may be a little Woodsian.

Roy merely takes a few of the conventions of Indian fiction in English and channels them through the children who dominate her story. Indian fiction has often run words together, in order to capture a speedy accent. Children feel textures as combinations because they do not understand what is being combined. Thus Roy, thinking on behalf of her twins, flourishes "oldfood smell," "one mint" (for "one minute"), "ofcourseofcourse," "bestfriend," "trainrumble," and so on. And like Mistry, Roy enjoys comic exchanges. In one such exchange, a now-adult Rahel talks to a man known as Comrade K. N. M. Pillai. He asks her, in his way, if she has had any children yet:

> "Any issues?"
> "No," Rahel said.
> "Still in planning stages, I suppose? Or expecting?"
> "No."
> "One is must. Boy, girl. Anyone," Comrade Pillai said. "Two is of course your choice."
> "We're divorced." Rahel hoped to shock him into silence.
> "Die-vorced?... That is most unfortunate ... Most unfortunate."

Here, of course, Roy is imagining a dialogue between two English-speakers, but the motion of the comedy is similar to non-English exchanges. There is a doubleness again, whereby both Indians and English are mocked—the Indians, because they are the speakers, and the English because those speakers' lapses are lapses into freedom. Solecism is individualism. There is a true connection in Indian fiction between language and ethics; we advance in brokenness.

The dangers of this highly verbal comedy are obvious: volubility, histrionics, farce. This might be called the Sergeant Fottrell Danger, after Flann O'Brien's novel *The Dalkey Archive*, in which Sergeant Fottrell is credited with describing a tree as "vert, verdant, vertical, verticillate, vertiginous, in the shade of branches even vespertine." A significant number of Indian novels seem to have been written by Sergeant Fottrell. The problem is acute when, as in Chatterjee's novel, there is little differentiation between the writer's prose and the characters' speech. In such cases, a novel can begin to lack internal borders, and turn rapidly into a tyrannical one-party state. Chatterjee is unbearable: "At their last booze bout," he writes, "Burfi, sozzled legless, has stretched out a hand towards a disinclined Joyce, and blazoned, 'I don't hanker after a single breath of my past, not a sole second.'"

Arundhati Roy's language is often lovely. Her prose is rich and petalled with fine similes: the "shiny black hairpins, like straightened snakes" in the hair of a fierce nurse; a man who "clasped his own armpits possessively, as though someone had asked to borrow them and he had just refused." But she can be sentimental, moistly whimsical, and *writhingly "poetic,"* in the style invented by Gabriel García Márquez and sanctioned for use in English by Toni Morrison: "She wore flowers in her hair and carried magic secrets in her eyes." Generally, Roy is at her best when she stays close to the perspective of the twins, and weakest when she is borrowing magical realism or sounding like Rushdie: "There was hustle-bustle. And police whistles." Or this: "Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age."

Rushdie has influenced Indian, Pakistani, and English writers toward a rather didactic form of exoticism, whereby unreality is supposed to daunt us, and to enchant us, with its anarchy. In its more innocent variations, this is merely a false strangeness, in which no character is allowed to be quiet—a kind of bastard Homer, where all the gods are in armor. (Rushdie has always been driven by a horror of silence.) Each character, even buildings, must have his resonant deformity—the extra digit on the left hand, the dwarfism, the giantism, the mother who has not spoken in 30 years, the house with the terrible smell, and so on. Roy finds it hard to avoid Rushdie's spell here. She labors to make all her pigments drip. So we have inseparable twins, one of whom is struck mute; cute names (Sophie Mol, Baby Kochamma), melodramatic happenings. The twins' grandfather beats his wife, until, one day, his son returns from Oxford (where he has been a Rhodes Scholar) and knocks him over: "He [the grandfather] never touched Mammachi again. But he never spoke to her either as long as he lived."

Rushdie is the reason for this kind of writing, which allows novelists to tell half-stories by presenting them as pungent pictures. In such writing, the image, the picture, is what seals the story, what provides the moral. *The Satanic Verses* opens with one such image, in which Rushdie's two protagonists fall out of an airplane over England. Immigration is a violent business, is the moral. Magical realism, which is essentially parable-like because it is essentially pictorial, always tends to didacticism of this kind; and at one level *The Satanic Verses* was pictorial ideology (the ideology of the many over the One, the secular over the religious, the historical over the liturgical). Roy is not as ideological as Rushdie, and not as magical-realist. She is essentially an extremely talented anecdotalist. She writes in paragraph-sized sections, which do not quite live with each other, but which lie alongside each other. The current, the cognitive irritation, the inwardness of character that makes different stories relate to each other is missing.

Yet the range of Roy's book is wonderful, and reminds us that Indian fiction has taken from nineteenth-century examples a freedom, like that of the police, to go anywhere in society. Vikram Chandra's stories, *Love and Longing in Bombay* (one of which is in *Mirrorwork*), move with great ease between the fancy houses on top of Bombay's Malabar Hill, and the slums and sheds of the servants who work in those houses. Seth's vast novel, a dense portrait of the 1950s, is the most expansive novel in English since *Middlemarch* (a book it does not otherwise much resemble). Both Mistry, in *A Delicate Balance*, and Roy write about the meeting of touchables and untouchables. With what ease Roy fills in a passing sketch, both comic and pathetic, of Murlidharan, "the level-crossing lunatic" (recalling, perhaps, Joe the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House*):

> Murlidharan was naked except for the tall plastic bag that somebody had fitted onto his head like a transparent chef's cap, through which the view of the landscape continued.... He couldn't remove his cap even if he had wanted to, because he had no arms. They had been blown off in Singapore in '42, within the first week of his running away from home to join the fighting ranks of the Indian National Army. After Independence he had himself registered as a Grade I Freedom Fighter and had been allotted a free first-class railway pass for life. This too he had lost (along with his mind), so he could no longer live on trains or in refreshment rooms in railway stations. Murlidharan had no home, no doors to lock, but he had his old keys tied carefully around his waist.

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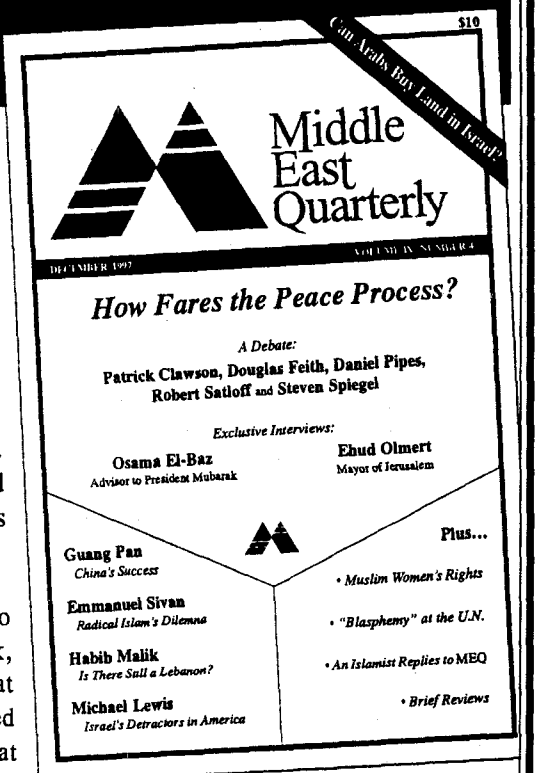
A man who lost his arms, his railway pass, and his mind, in that order. Perhaps rather than Dickens, who bleats sentimentally on behalf of Joe the crossing-sweeper, we might think of Gogol's Akaky Akakievich, who lost his overcoat and then his mind, in that order. What must strike non-Indian readers—and this passage is characteristic, in content if not in quality, of much Indian writing—is the stability of the material. In literary terms, Murlidharan is just there for the taking, without apologies, without false consciousness, without politics. His extremity, naked and armless, an extremity largely absent from Western societies of course, allows the writer enough alienation to make him a literary subject. In extremity he can be archetypal. And yet Roy is a good enough writer to be able to twist this material back into the personal, to rub the archetype for its trapped life.

A fiction that can go anywhere in society is liable to make claims for itself, as Balzac did when he called fiction the secret history of nations. *Midnight's Children* earnestly desired to be India's great modern epic, and also burlesqued that desire. At its end, Saleem Sinai begins to disintegrate under the strain of speaking for 600 million people. A very good recent anthology of Pakistani writing in English, *A Dragonfly in the Sun*, suggests that Rushdie's shadow is long in that country, too. Thus the Pakistani writer Bapsi Sidhwa attempted, in *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), to narrate the birth of Pakistan through the eyes of a small boy, as Rushdie uses Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* to announce the birth of independent India. Less successfully, the Pakistani novelist Adam Zameenzad also has combined epic and magical realism. (Muneeza Shamsie's book introduces a number of talented writers who will be unfamiliar to Western readers. Among the best seem to me Moazzam Sheikh, Aamer Hussein, S. Afzal Haider, Sorayya Y. Khan, and Moniza Alvi.)

The difficulty is not in epic sweep, but more in the danger that India offers to the novelist to indulge in bloated totalism, and in a meaningless politics of multiplicity. In *The Satanic Verses*, a character helpfully pointed out that "the modern city is ... the locus classicus of incompatible realities." This reservoir of "incompatible realities," this pool of happy fluidities, is now overflowing. In his last two novels, Rushdie has erected what amounts to a secular theology: "Bombayness" against fixity; hybridity against sameness; the bustle of words over the frieze of the Word; many tales, preferably spoken by many characters, over the one tale. As theology itself this is hardly true, nor is it necessarily defensible. It can degrade, when left inside a cozy enough cupboard, into nothing more than the idea that India is the sum of its contradictions, and that its meaning is that it means too many things to be meaningful. The best Indian novels have resisted this temptation: Seth's, Mistry's *A Delicate Balance*, *Midnight's Children*, Amitav Ghosh's excellent *The Circle of Reason*.

Once again, however, Arundhati Roy acts like a glass hull, through which one can see the various currents and cross-currents of contemporary writing. Every so often, she displays the inflammations of infection by Rushdie in this regard, too. Her novel carries a watery baptism from John Berger, whose epigraph reads: "Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one." (When was this oppressive epoch?) And early in the novel, Roy offers a Rushdie-like meditation on incompatible realities. Rahel remembers the family firm, Paradise Pickles & Preserves, and recalls that in addition to making the usual products, they made illegal banana jam, illegal because according to the Food Products Organization, "it was neither jam nor jelly. Too thin for jelly and too thick for jam. An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency, they said ... Looking back now, to Rahel it seemed as though this diffi-

Candor from Jerusalem to Cairo



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culty that their family had with classification ran much deeper than the jam-jelly question ... they all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory." Roy is too good an artist to allow many of these relaxations; still, her novel is sometimes damaged by them. Superb in places, acute and charming and rich, *The God of Small Things* nevertheless protects itself too easily with a membrane of lyrical attitudes, which artificially hold in the novel's disparate stories.

The secular theology of the many is as far as much contemporary Indian fiction goes in discussing matters of religious faith. In general, the literature collected in *Mirrorwork* is rather optimistic, and amazingly unmetaphysical. Even those Indian novels which are supposed to be tragic remain in the mind as comic: this is true of Roy's novel in some ways, and certainly true of Mistry's last book, as well as Rushdie's. (Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Pakistani writing gives evidence of being different in this regard, and more earnestly exercised about religion.) A country drunk on gods is perhaps not sober about religion, though the rise of Hindu fundamentalism threatens this deistic bacchanal.

A more testable explanation is that literature is often a matter of exchanges. Indian literature in English abounds in strong, florid caricature. It is one of its glories. As in Jane Austen, most of these characters have a rationed depth. For all their vividness, they lack inwardness, and they do not change much in the course of their passage through the novels. Without inwardness, however, there is no agony of the tragic, metaphysical kind. Perhaps again, the poetical riot of pluralism, and the belief that there are many, many stories, does in fact secularize the Indian novel, and drowns the stoniness of religious ferocity. Roy seems to think so, and explains in her novel that India always snatches away one's inwardness, one's own beliefs, and presses her larger, epic claims on the soul: "personal despair could never be enough [in India] ... something happened when personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving ... public turmoil of a nation. That Big God howled like a hot wind and demanded obeisance." The individual soul must surrender to the Big God, and the Big God is always India. •

The King Is Dead

By Peter Green

Alexander the Great by Richard Stoneman

(Routledge, 101 pp., $11.99)

He had one blue eye and one brown. His teeth resembled little pegs. A noticeably high complexion was matched by an equally noticeable sweetish body odor, and a beard so scanty that he preferred, despite the hirsute whiskers of his Macedonian barons, to go clean-shaven. His voice, we are told, was loud, harsh, and dissonant. He was stocky of build, and so short that when he sat on the captured throne of his Persian adversary Darius, his feet dangled in space. This did not stop him from being an excellent runner, which his lifelong emulation of "swift-footed Achilles" must have required of him from an early age. His yearning, upward gaze—much copied by artists—was probably due to deviant cervical vertebrae, or to congenital ocular torticollis, a chronic twisting and contraction of the neck muscles.

His parents, Philip II and the redoubtable Epirot queen Olympias, worried about his lack of heterosexual interests, and feared that he might be growing up a girlish invert (*gynnis*), so they provided him with a beautiful Thessalian courtesan to encourage his manly nature. (Theophrastus, who tells this story, appears to have had it from no less a person than his predecessor Aristotle, the boy's tutor.) The suspected *gynnis* grew up to incur suspicion of his father's assassination; to conquer all the known—and a fair chunk of the unknown—East; to kill untold thousands (including some of his own most loyal officers); and in the process to create a legend for romantics, ancient and modern, of a supposed idealist, obsessed with realizing the Brotherhood of Man, presumably with himself in the role of Big Daddy. This looks like compensatory denial on a really massive scale.

It is also, of course, the stuff of myth; and mythification is what Alexander got, not only after his death in Babylon in 323 BC, when still only 33 years old, but throughout his brief but meteoric career. He himself played no small part in this process, since from the moment he set foot on Asian soil he took considerable care over the public image that he projected, even keeping a tame historian, Callisthenes (Aristotle's nephew!), to write up the "official" version of his exploits. Thus we glimpse him hurling a spear into Anatolian soil to claim the Achaemenid empire as "spear-won territory"; racing naked round the tomb of Achilles with his companion Hephaestion; slashing through the famous "Gordian knot" with his sword to lay claim to the title of "Lord of Asia"; riding round the shore under Mount Climax while the sea retreated in alleged obeisance to him; trekking to the Siwah Oasis in the Libyan desert to consult the Oracle of Zeus Ammon (no overt report of what was vouchsafed to him, but broad hints of divine paternity, if not of godhead); and treating Darius's captured queen Stateira and her retinue with knightly restraint and courtesy (though this failed to prevent Stateira's death two years later, while still in captivity, from a miscarriage).

As the conquests mounted up, and the treasure poured in, and megalomania found fertile soil, the propagandists had to work considerably harder. The accumulated wealth secured from the reserves stored at Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana totalled, at a conservative estimate, 187,000 talents, with the talent representing 57 and a half pounds of pure metal. Most of this was refined gold, to be unloaded recklessly on the Mediterranean market within four or five years, creating acute financial instability for several generations of Alexander's Hellenistic successors. But for Alexander himself, booty on this hitherto unimagined scale meant that he had become not only the Eastern world's most successful conqueror, but also, quite simply, the richest individual alive. Power and wealth dazzlingly coalesced. His every least wish brought instant fulfillment. His most exotic fantasies could be turned into fact—or, at the very least, heartily endorsed by his immediate inner circle, on whom the pressure to turn sycophant must have been enormous. It is to their credit that so many resisted the temptation; and here, of course, is where things began to turn nasty, and the tarnish started to spread over all that lavish gold.

At one level, flatterers were not slow to convince their generalissimo that, since his achievements by now rivaled, indeed

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eclipsed, those of Heracles or Dionysus in similar circumstances (the condition known as *isotheotes*, or "equality to godhead"), he could with good reason claim divine status himself. Nothing loath (the seeds had already been sown by Olympias and that oracle from Zeus Ammon), Alexander had himself painted as Zeus wielding the thunderbolt. Those who crossed him should have taken the hint: he had always reacted savagely to opposition. The Achaemenid empire in his hands, he was faced with the ticklish problem of how to combine the roles of Great King (for his Persian subjects) and crusading general (for Macedonians and Greeks). Being all things to all men can hardly have been his forte: he was too intensely, solipsistically himself for that. Still, he did try to make his old-guard officers and Greek intimates practice deep Oriental prostration (*proskynesis*) before him. They grumbled, and refused: worse, encouraged by Callisthenes, they made a joke of it. Callisthenes was arrested (on another charge) and eventually executed. This removal of Aristotle's nephew ensured a bad press for Alexander among Greek intellectuals and philosophers, who lost no time in portraying him as the worst kind of military tyrant.

Besides, by this time (from 328 BC onwards) the army had been on campaign for far too long, tempers were frayed, and paranoia (stimulated by Alexander's spiraling pretensions) was rapidly spreading. The stressed-out repeatedly found solace—and, dangerously, release—in that well-tried Macedonian panacea, the massive drunken binge. It is from now on that a case can be made for alcoholism as a serious factor affecting Alexander's judgment—indeed, in one notorious case, resulting in his murder of a fellow-officer who had saved his life during the first battle on Asiatic soil, at the river Granicus. The King began to suspect (or claim to suspect) plots everywhere: among the Royal Pages, on the part of his senior cavalry commander Philotas. There were inquisitions, scenes of torture. Not only Callisthenes and Philotas, but Philotas's father, Parmenio—Philip's greatest general and Alexander's own invaluable second-in-command—were purged. As the supply of trustworthy Macedonians dwindled, and Alexander pressed ever further eastward, he began to enroll and to train a cadre of young Persians who were known, ominously, as "The Successors." His relations with his old officer corps worsened steadily.

What in the end precipitated the crisis that put paid to Alexander's grandiose dreams of a march to the world's end was a simple, and fatal, ignorance of the geography of the Far East. He thought he was bringing his exhausted troops to the shores of Ocean; instead, after three monsoons and as many debilitating campaigns, they reached the Hyphasis (Beas) river to find themselves confronted by the interminable Ganges plain, and rumors of savage war-elephants trained to stomp all infantry opposition to a pulp. The army promptly mutinied. Alexander, like Achilles, retired to his tent in a sulk. Clearly he could think of no harsher penalty to inflict on the recalcitrant than to deprive them of his incomparable presence. This narcissistic emotional blackmail had worked like a dream on several previous occasions. Now, for the first time, it failed: a point had been reached where Alexander needed his men more than they did him, and he was forced, for the first time ever, to yield.

The omens obligingly advised retreat, predicting disaster were the expedition to advance further. Great monuments were erected to mark his turning-point. He had saved some face, but what followed makes clear that he never forgave this insubordinate blow to his ambition. The trek back to Babylon involved some of the bloodiest fighting yet, against Indian warrior tribes, with a record of sheer senseless slaughter that recently led one of the best Alexander historians, Brian Bosworth, in *Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph* (1996), to draw parallels with the activities of the Conquistadors in Central America. Worse, Alexander deliberately, and unnecessarily, chose a route through the barren Gedrosian desert (today the Makran coast range, where President Carter's Iranian rescue helicopters came adrift). His expeditionary force had by now acquired a mass of hangers-on: camp concubines, traders, civilians of every sort. It looks unpleasantly as though Alexander meant to whittle down this vast body by means of an ordeal that only the fittest would survive. If so, he certainly succeeded.

The remnants of the Macedonian army celebrated their return to civilization with a riotous Dionysiac orgy that lasted for days. Few had expected Alexander ever to reemerge from India alive, and in that belief many governors and other high officials had fatally compromised their loyalty during his absence. Partying gave way to widespread purges. Heads rolled. Despite the toll taken on his constitution by illnesses, despite wounds that, cumulatively, would have killed any lesser man, despite his ever-heavier drinking, Alexander's frenetic

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energy never slackened. His edicts became more sweeping, more erratic. All exiles whatsoever were to be repatriated. All cities were to honor him, Alexander, as a god. Intellectuals might sneer ("Sure, let him be Zeus, and Poseidon too if he likes"), but the prospect of this immensely powerful individual indulging increasingly arbitrary whims was indeed too like the behavior of such deities for comfort. Flattering embassies streamed into Babylon. Alexander's European viceroy, Antipater, when similarly summoned, prudently sent his son Cassander to negotiate on his behalf. Cassander was unwise enough to giggle at the court's Oriental pomp. Alexander, in a fit of rage, grabbed him by the hair and beat his head against the wall. Years later, a crowned king himself, Cassander would still shudder uncontrollably whenever he saw a picture or a statue of his tormentor.

Alexander continued to plan furiously: there would be a campaign into Arabia, the whole North African coast was to be invaded, a military road built along it. Grandiose arrangements were made for the funeral and burial of his alter ego Hephaestion. A tomb was to be built for Philip to match the Egyptian pyramids. (Guilt, perhaps?) Yet all this frantic bustle finally suggests accidie: Plutarch records his admission that he was "at a total loss to know what he should do with the rest of his life." Nature, or just possibly man, solved the problem. In June 323 he died, after a brief illness. Whether he succumbed to malaria, sheer exhaustion, wounds, or poison will never be known. Certainly there were enough people who had good reason to fear him.

Yet his luck held: he died just soon enough to let his mythic apotheosis blossom unchecked. Another few years, perhaps less, and the empire that he built would have unravelled, the bubble of invincibility would have burst forever. An Alexander in his boozy dotage is unthinkable. He had to be forever young, forever striving after new conquests, letting romantic admirers gush on about "that gorgeous, raging, brilliant time in which an implacable golden demigod rammed Hellenism forever into history and legend." Before the unwary get too worked up by this kind of hyperbole, it's worth recalling, not least today, that during his own lifetime the mainland Greeks whom he had conquered cursed his very name. "Alexander dead?" one politician exclaimed when the news reached Athens. "Impossible! The whole world would stink of his corpse."

Such a reaction was not, at the time, surprising. Alexander had claimed to be conducting a Panhellenic crusade to avenge Xerxes's invasion of Greece a hundred and fifty years earlier (which is rather like Jacques Chirac deciding to invade Britain to wipe out the shame of Waterloo). Before he left, however, he destroyed the ancient Greek city of Thebes, and put its inhabitants to the sword—an act for which he was never forgiven—because they had dared to rate freedom higher than Macedonian overlordship, and, worse, they had taunted him from the city wall as a barbarian bully. Even more ironically, he so distrusted those Greek troops who came with him that he never used them in the front line; and he took the huge risk, south of Miletus, of capturing every Anatolian port from the landward side rather than trust a Greek fleet (now summarily dismissed) to do the job for him. During Alexander's absence abroad, his regent Antipater put down at least one Greek rising by force, killing a Spartan king in the process. His army of occupation, 12,000 strong, made it painfully clear how much all the talk about Panhellenism was worth. Finally it was not the Greeks, but the Romans, who gave Alexander the title of "the Great."

His reputation underwent some fascinating sea-changes over the centuries. Ptolemy I—the shrewdest of his officers, and a world-class conniving old rogue, who took Egypt as his fief and ran it from the King's own foundation of Alexandria—hijacked the royal corpse on its way back to Macedonia, embalmed it, and put it on show in a gold coffin. Like Lenin in Red Square, Alexander dead offered a silent but eloquent legitimization of his successor's rule. Augustus, no mean empire-builder himself, visited the tomb, wondered aloud, shrewdly, why the Great One took so little interest in administering the lands that he had conquered, and accidentally broke a bit off the royal nose. Tomb and body vanished during the fighting that convulsed Alexandria during Aurelian's reign, leaving the Middle Ages to meditate on evanescent glory: "And where is Alisaundir that conqeryd al?" Lydgate asked. In Greece, ironically, he survived only as a comic cut-out of the Karaghiozi shadow-theater.

What took off and developed a weird hybrid life of its own was the Alexander myth. Almost all of his generals and his companions wrote their memoirs, and several historians studied Alexander's life and campaigns on the basis of eye-witness evidence; but by a kind of historical Gresham's Law these accounts were promptly eclipsed by the so-called *Alexander Romance*. This fantastic farrago of fact and fiction—as Richard Stoneman says, "an epistolary novel about his conquests, descriptions of the exotic lands he visited, documents from the propaganda war following his death, a list of his city foundations, and an ever-expanding repertoire of wonder tales"—started life as an Alexandrian foundation-legend a generation or so after the founder's death, and was eventually translated into 37 languages, ranging from Syriac and Armenian to Old Serbian and Icelandic. Perhaps in consequence, the modern historian has no complete source for Alexander's activities datable to less than three hundred years after his death, and judgments on Alexander himself have always been colored to a quite extraordinary degree by current obsessions and prejudices. Hence, I suspect, the never-ending flow of publications on his achievements and, particularly, his character.

At the start, of course, there was a general consensus: "conquest and empire," in Brian Bosworth's pregnant summation, were things eminently desirable, and their successful achievement formed a yardstick for greatness. Considered from this point of regard, Alexander was great indeed. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, things began to change. The French, American, and Greek revolutions made liberty and equality (if not fraternity) hot, and historians such as Grote shifted interest in antiquity from imperial Rome to democratic Athens. Excuses now had to be found for expansion at the expense of lesser breeds. The "implacable golden demigod" and his ambitions had become an embarrassment.

But this was the century of benevolent colonialism and missionary outreach, which soon supplied, with the aid of an early essay of Plutarch's, an alternative formula. Alexander's aim was to bring Hellenism to the benighted barbarian world, to enlighten the heathen. Invasion was revised as cultural missionary-work. A fantasy more *outré* than anything in the *Alexander Romance* took off, and held the field for over a century. Most people know this through the still-popular version of Sir William Tarn, first published in 1927, when Lowell Thomas—not coincidentally, I feel—was promoting his romanticized version of T.E. Lawrence, and the League of Nations had not yet run out of gas.

Tarn's Alexander was a clean-cut idealist pursuing the Brotherhood of Man. Never mind the body count: Hellenism had top priority, and besides, in this Brotherhood everyone knew his place,

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as the seating arrangements for the "feast of reconciliation" at Opis made uncomfortably clear. Macedonians and Greeks first, Persians next, the rest nowhere: Orwell hadn't yet pointed out that some animals were more equal than others, but the idea was already in the air. And colonial idealism was not only what the public at large wanted to hear. Despite all the evidence, it kept most scholars happy too. Ernst Badian, who finally destroyed this most persistent of myths, has testified that for years it was virtually impossible to get criticism of Tarn's central thesis published in any English-language scholarly periodical.

What changed things, of course, were the horrors of totalitarianism. People finally realized that the ideological pursuit of the Brotherhood of Man tended to bring not the millennium, but a ruined economy and a ruined environment, plus mass executions. How different from Pol Pot's Cambodian killing fields had Alexander's progress through the Achaemenid empire really been? To what extent were he and his men—ambitious Macedonian officers, greedy Greek traders, hard-bitten mercenaries—pursuing or proliferating the Hellenic ideal?

It was not only Badian who came up with some dusty answers; but to a surprising extent they were still not what students of Alexander, much less enthusiastic Hellenists, wanted to hear. In 1961, the American scholar S.K. Eddy produced a devastating indictment with the self-explanatory title *The King is Dead: Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism, 334-31 BC.* Even if the Macedonians had been promoting Hellenism, the Near East simply didn't want it. Yet Eddy's book was, for the most part, dropped quietly down the memory-hole.

The less P.C. it gets to admire Alexander, the more people scrabble to find excuses for him. In Greece itself, the situation has been complicated still further by his elevation, ever since the War of Independence, to a national and patriotic icon, something that would have shocked Demosthenes almost out of his mind. For him and his contemporaries, right or wrong, Alexander was seen as a foreign—indeed, a barbarian—despot, who had imposed his rule on the Greek states by main force. His kingdom of Macedonia, with its strange patois and sub-Homeric customs, seemed at least as foreign to southern Greeks as (say) Scots highlanders to a London cockney. Alexander I of the Macedonian Argead dynasty was barred as non-Greek from the Olympic Games, and only got the ruling reversed by concocting a pedigree deriving the Argeads from Argos.

So what has happened? By an ironic twist of history, the hated conqueror has been metamorphosed into the Happy Warrior, for Greek politicians to invoke and for army recruits to emulate. Today Alexander and his homeland are presented as alien no longer, but as North Greek, part of the family. Macedonia—in modern times so chopped up between Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and the South Slavs that it has given its name to a fruit-salad—is now claimed as sovereign territory by the race that once, in defeat, cursed it and its rulers. The whirligig of time brings in its revenges.

In 1988 a friend of mine asked, at a conference on the Hellenistic age, "Why are we looking at the same things we looked at fifty years ago and coming up with completely different answers?" The changes that have befallen Alexander's reputation during the past century or two provide an instructive answer. They must also present something of a problem to anyone who, like Richard Stoneman, sets out to write a general introductory study on this baffling yet eternally charismatic figure. It is hard to deal with the moral issues, yet it is almost impossible to avoid them. "A shilling life will give you all the facts," as Auden said, and the broad outline of Alexander's career is pretty firmly established. But then we are plunged into the quagmire of motive and justification, the debate over relative cultural standards, our new nervousness about racial prejudice, colonialism, the pursuit of empire. Can we judge Alexander by our own standards? Surely not. Yet where is a satisfactory yardstick to be found?

The trouble is, what stirs our blood may end up embarrassing our conscience. It is hard to avoid reacting viscerally to Marlowe's ringing declaration: "Is it not passing brave to be a King,/ And ride in triumph through Persepolis?" But the fact remains that, in Brian Bosworth's words, "Alexander spent much of his time killing and directing killing, and, arguably, killing was what he did best." Arguments about the spread of Hellenism, much less the aim to establish the Brotherhood of Man, are finally attempts to palliate that grisly body-count by an appeal to ideology. The Romans required a minimum of 5,000 enemy dead for an official triumph. Our age gags on that kind of bloodthirstiness, preferring to justify mass killings (Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot) as an instrument of politics. Other folks, other strokes.

Stoneman possesses some useful qualifications for writing on Alexander. His level-headed study *Legends of Alexander the Great* (1994), the by-product of a really excellent translation of the notori-

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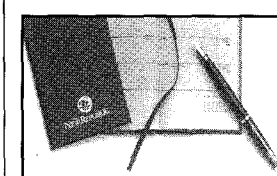

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ous *Romance* (1991), has given him a comfortable critical control over the wilder fantasies in which the Alexander tradition came to abound. Better still, it has allowed him to extract valuable grains of historical evidence (some on the foundation of Alexandria) from material too often dismissed out of hand as fictional chaff and nothing else. He also reveals a passion for clarity and concision. These are not small virtues; and they are enhanced by a total absence of the obfuscatory jargon so prevalent in modern academic prose. Despite Stoneman's opinion of my own biography of Alexander (that it "seems positively to revel in the most ghoulish and discreditable stories about Alexander, often from unreliable sources"—I'd enjoy a debate on that), I have no hesitation in recommending his little monograph as the most sensible, even-handed, and up-to-date introductory study of Alexander known to me. The school-leavers and the undergraduates for whom it is designed can count themselves lucky.

Obviously, in so limited a form, they won't get the whole story; but Stoneman generally manages at least to flag important points for future study. It has long been a scholarly axiom—which he endorses—that the trickiest problem in Alexander studies remains the evaluation of the sources. True enough: propagandists, axe-grinders, gossips, romancers, apologists, or military hacks the lot of them, and not even available intact, but fragmentarily filtered through three centuries and more of imaginative rehashing before we even get to the first of the still-complete accounts.

Not that the latter inspire too much confidence, either. Plutarch was a moral portraitist rather than a historian. Justin (c. AD 200) offers a mere epitome of the account by Pompeius Trogus, a Gallic zoologist who lived under Augustus. Diodorus Siculus (first century BC) includes the period in his scissors-and-paste universal history, the so-called *Bibliotheca*. The Roman Quintus Curtius Rufus dissolves into rhetoric on the least provocation, and seems to have written up the Conspiracy of Philotas with one eye on the Julio-Claudian treason trials. Arrian, a Romanized Greek senator, general, and man of letters who served the emperor Hadrian, and is generally reckoned the best of the bunch, nevertheless takes Ptolemy's memoirs as his main source, on the grounds that "as a king himself, it would be improper for [Ptolemy] to lie." Ironic? I doubt it. But Ptolemy himself would have relished the claim.

While Stoneman briefly sets out the problems involved, it is surprising that he does not direct his readers to translations of these latter-day witnesses, all now easily available in excellent English versions. Let the curious make up their own minds: they may get a rude awakening. He also retains Tarn's trick of bunching Diodorus, Curtius Rufus, and Justin together as the "Vulgate tradition," a dismissive label originally designed to undercut the validity of their (often convincing) hostile testimony. Indeed, for too long Alexander's defenders practiced (covertly or openly) a disarmingly simplistic rule of thumb when judging evidence about him: favorable testimony was self-evidently true, while criticism stemmed from the Vulgate tradition, or the "Mercenaries' Source," or the "Peripatetic Source," these last two being convenient poison-pen hold-alls dreamed up by Tarn to cover all military grumbling or philosophical accusations of tyranny. Stoneman has managed to shake off most of this influence, but not quite all. He names Tarn and Victor Ehrenberg as the last of the idolaters, but somehow omits one still-living guardian of the faith, N.G.L. Hammond, whose analysis of the sources (much in demand as a cautionary example in historiographical seminars) still rates a respectful mention in Stoneman's book.

Hammond, too (reinforced by Simon Price's rather different work on the Roman emperors) seems to be behind the resurrection here of Tarn's disingenuous explanation of why, in 324, Alexander demanded to be worshiped as a god. Alcoholism? Megalomania? Relentless sycophants encouraging superhuman power-fantasies in the known world's wealthiest and most powerful individual? Not a bit of it. Here were the technically free and independent cities of Greece, gathered together as the League of Corinth. How could an imperial ruler legally claim the authority over them that otherwise he was debarred from exercising? (No, I'm not making this up.) Why, of course, as a god. I thought the late J.P.V.D. Balsdon had laughed this one out of court forever, as not only the acme of unreality, but also, taken literally, a cheap trick: "If the Greeks said, 'But you are not empowered to command the recall of the exiles,' he would be able to say, 'Ah, but you ought to have thought of that before you voted me a god.'" At least Stoneman doesn't swallow Hammond's parallel exercise in fatuity, the argument that it was all right for Alexander to destroy Thebes because he got the League of Corinth's authorization to do so.

Such lapses apart, Stoneman deals pretty fairly with the awkward or embarrassing moments in Alexander's career, of which there were not a few. Some he omits altogether, presumably as incredible (by reason of ghoulishness?): these include the scientific experiment (reported by Plutarch and Strabo) that Alexander, in the best Aristotelian or Hippocratic tradition, is said to have conducted near the oil-fields of modern Kirkuk, setting a plain-faced young slave on fire in the bath to find out whether naphtha was, in fact, water-resistant when ignited. (It is the detail about the poor wretch being "plain-faced" that, for me, carries instant conviction.) On the other hand, the equally well-documented incident after the fall of Gaza, when Alexander dragged the garrison-commander round the walls, still alive, at his chariot-tail, Stoneman now, somewhat reluctantly, accepts as probable fact.

He is even more jittery over the likelihood, on the *cui bono* principle (which he concedes), that Olympias, perhaps even Alexander himself, played some part in the all-too-timely assassination of Philip in 336; but he grits his teeth and sets out the evidence anyway. He also is quite ready (and all credit to him) to concede that the less-than-heroic account of the battle at the River Granicus given by Diodorus (as opposed to the suicidal death-or-glory charge favored by Plutarch and Arrian) may well come closer to the truth. It certainly matches Parmenio's shrewdly cautious advice; and though our sources often record occasions on which Alexander triumphantly ignored his second-in-command, there were some (the battle of Issus being one notorious instance) when he would have avoided a great deal of unnecessary trouble if only he had listened; and others, less commented on (in all likelihood including the Granicus), when he actually did. As for Alexander's own death, Stoneman gives a detailed discussion of the evidence for poisoning, but he reasonably concludes that a combination of natural causes—wounds, disease, sheer physical exhaustion—is more probable.

His conclusions are, by and large, sober and pragmatic. Yes, Alexander's achievement did spread Hellenism throughout the Near East, thus providing "the matrix in which the Roman Empire, Christianity and other important aspects of western civilisation could take root." But at once he adds: "The narrative and analysis carried out in the course of the book will, I hope, have shown that such grandiose prospects were far from Alexander's imagining and that his own aims and ambitions were very different." Amen to that; as also to Stoneman's conviction that by the end the conqueror had come to believe in his own megalomaniacal pro-

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paganda. As Augustus noted, Alexander's forte was never for administration, it was always for further conquest. He died dreaming of Arabia and the western Mediterranean. How long could he have held this unwieldy mass of "spear-won territory" together? Stoneman is properly pessimistic. He argues that Alexander drained Macedonia of its manpower and left it dangerously weakened, simply "to feed his own ambition." Correct again.

The momentous consequences, in sum, were all accidental and unintended. "It was far from Alexander's intention to mingle cultures for any kind of altruistic or philosophical motive." So much for the Brotherhood of Man. (I suspect also that world-conquest was in Alexander's mind far earlier than Stoneman will allow.) Yet the races did, slowly and haphazardly, in Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid East, begin to mingle; Greek in these areas did become a crucial lingua franca; Greek ideas, and Greek sculpture, did have a fundamental impact on early Buddhism through the agency of the Greco-Bactrian kings; in Alexandria a genuine cross-fertilization of Jewish and Greek literature (though a much smaller one than Stoneman and others suppose) did take place; the fusion of Cynicism and Indian ascetic thought—something on which Stoneman has done excellent work—did have interesting consequences; the general Stoic and Peripatetic view of Alexander was far less monolithic, and far less uniformly hostile, than Tarn believed, but did encourage later Christian objections to his character.

And, of course, there was the wildly proliferating fantasy of the *Alexander Romance*. What fascinates Stoneman, rightly, is "the way the figure of Alexander becomes Protean: he serves to emblematise the dominant concerns and anxieties of the host culture"—as interpretations ranging from Schachermeyr's early blond Aryan racist to Tarn's idealistic philosopher-king serve to remind us. That is why he will always remain elusive, always embody so much more than the sum of his historical achievements.

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Logocentrism

BY JESSICA HELFAND

From Lascaux to Brooklyn by Paul Rand

(Yale University Press, 200 pp., $55)

Graphic design is easily the most ubiquitous of all the arts. It is everywhere, touching everything we do, everything we see, everything we buy: on billboards and in Bibles, on taxi receipts and on web sites, on birth certificates and on gift certificates, on the folded circulars tucked inside jars of aspirin and on the thick pages of children's chubby board books. It is the boldly directional arrows on street signs and the blurred, frenetic typography on the title sequence to *E.R.* It is the bright green logo for the New York Giants and the staid front page of *The New York Times*. It is hang-tags in clothing stores, playbills in theaters, timetables in train stations, postage stamps and cereal box packaging, fascist propaganda posters and junk mail. It is complex combinations of words and pictures, numbers and charts, photographs and illustrations that, in order to succeed, demand the clear thinking of a thoughtful individual who can orchestrate these elements so that they all add up to something distinctive, or useful, or beautiful, or playful, or subversive, or in some way truly memorable. It is a popular art, a practical art, an applied art, an ancient art. It is informed by numerous disciplines, including art and architecture, philosophy and literature, politics and performance.

Simply put, graphic design is the art of visualizing ideas. Until World War II, it was better known in the United States as commercial art. Practiced by printers and typesetters, it was more a vocation than a profession, more a reflection of the economic realities of a newly industrialized culture than an opportunity to engage the creative expression of an individual or an idea. Unlike the experimentation that characterized design as it was being practiced and taught in Europe in the early years of this century—led by Cubism and Constructivism, pioneers of DeStijl and disciples of the Bauhaus—what we now think of as graphic design was, in this country, driven by the demands of commerce, and fueled by the prospect of eliminating the economic hardships that had plagued the nation during the Depression.

Commercial art was a service industry motivated by the same honorable objectives that characterized the average consumer: it sought to encourage stability, to promote prosperity, and to maintain a generally happy, don't-rock-the-boat sort of aesthetic status quo. So it is perhaps not surprising that a good deal of the design of printed matter dating from the years between the wars was dry, unimaginative, and predictable. It was also cluttered and decorative: the use of ornament became a kind of aesthetic panacea, masking the greater cultural complexities of this awkward, transitional age. This ornamentation was at odds with the streamlined simplicity that otherwise characterized so much of the artistic expression—the painting, the music, the literature—of the same fertile period.

And if we consider "commercial art" not a fine but a popular art, it fails also as an adequate mirror of social history. With the great exception of World War II propaganda—which suggests an altogether different aesthetic, evoking the urgency of a highly politicized and mobilized nation—the typical outlets for what would eventually become "graphic design" were met, in the 1920s and 1930s, with little in the way of truly noteworthy activity. It was a curious time, from the standpoint of design history: a period marked by great social upheaval and negligible creative advance.

By the early 1930s, however, a small but accomplished group of American and European expatriate designers began to experiment with new ways to approach the design of commercial printed matter. Combining the experimental formal vocabularies of their European colleagues with the material demands of American commerce, they helped to inaugurate a new visual language that would revolutionize the role of design as both a service and an art. Of this group—which included Lester Beall, Bradbury Thompson, and Alexey Brodovich, among others—none was so accomplished, or would produce as many lasting contributions to the field, as Paul Rand, arguably America's most accomplished graphic designer, who died last year at the age of 82.

More than any other designer of this century, Rand is credited with bringing the modernist design aesthetic to post-

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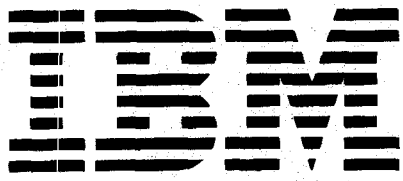
war America. Highly influenced by the European modernists—Klee and Picasso, Calder and Miró—Rand's formal vocabulary signaled the advent of a new era. Using photography and montage, cut paper and what would later become known as "The New Typography"—asymmetrical typography that engaged the eye and activated the page—Rand rallied against the sentimentality of stolid, commercial layouts and introduced a new, sharper, cleaner, and forward-looking vocabulary of the kind that he had observed in such European design magazines as the German *Gebrauchsgraphik* and the English *Commercial Art*. To look at Rand's work today—work that dates from half a century ago—is to see how an idea can be distilled to its most concentrated and salient form. The style is playful, the message immediate, the communication undeniably direct.



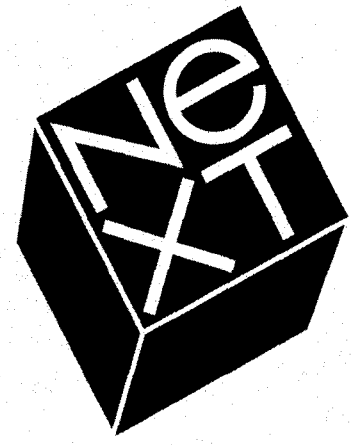
IBM LOGO BY PAUL RAND, 1960

Born in 1914 in Brooklyn, the son of Viennese immigrants who were Orthodox Jews, Rand began drawing as a child and went on to attend the Pratt Institute, the Parsons School of Design, and the New York Art Students League, where he studied with George Grosz. He opened his own studio in New York in 1935; two years later he was named art director of *Esquire*. In his twenties, he suffered a terrible loss when his identical twin brother, a jazz musician, died in an automobile accident; his divorce and subsequent remarriage followed not long after. During these turbulent years, he remained busy designing layouts for *Apparel Arts* magazine, as well as covers for the anti-fascist magazine *Direction*, where, between 1938 and 1941, he developed his skills in connection with complicated political issues: the Nazi seizure of the Sudetenland, for example.

In 1941, at the age of 27, Rand left to join the William H. Weintraub advertising agency, where he would spend the next 13 years producing advertisements for, among others, El Producto, Dubonnet, Orbach's, and Revlon. He was hired as the graphic design consultant for IBM in 1956 (the same year he was hired by Josef Albers to teach in the graduate design program at Yale), where he collaborated with Thomas Watson Jr. and Eliot Noyes on the famous striped letterforms that are still in use today.

Rand was also one of the few distinguished practitioners of graphic design who saw fit (or found time) to publish on the subject. A contributing writer to numerous design publications here and abroad, he went on to publish four important books: *Thoughts on Design* (1946); *Paul Rand: A Designer's Art* (1985); *Design, Form and Chaos* (1994); and, most recently, *From Lascaux to Brooklyn* (1996). Consequently, he was perhaps the only designer of his generation to articulate a sustained theoretical position about graphic design.

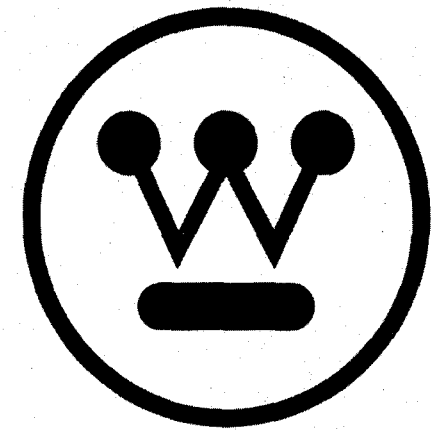
Rand was a modernist not only in the reductive vocabularies of his design, but also in the intellectual curiosity of his writing. His books typically consist of short, staccato-like essays in which he considers the fundamental factors that shape our understanding of visual communication. In each of his books, he scrutinizes the relationship between art and design, between design and aesthetics, between aesthetics and experience.



NeXT LOGO BY PAUL RAND, 1986

At length, he examines the role of intuition and ideas, the balance between form and function, and the universal language of geometry. He believed these topics to be timeless. "My interest has always been in restating the validity of those ideas which, by and large, have guided artists since the time of Polyclitus," he wrote. "It is the continuing relevance of these ideals that I mean to emphasize, especially to those who have grown up in a world of punk and graffiti." There is a personal, almost spiritual quality to Rand's work. The promises of modernism, in which the harmony of formal relationships gesture to a higher order, and seek to embrace a purist ideal, must have held, for Rand, a kind of divine appeal.

And while it is true that Rand's celebration of pure form gestured to an economy of means that might be characterized as quintessentially modern, it is also true that his resistance to new, more abstract forms of expression revealed itself repeatedly in his writings, in public lectures and interviews, thus branding him, in his final years, as outmoded and conservative. Throughout his professional life, the words most frequently associated with Rand were "irascible," "ornery," and "curmudgeon"—characteristics which led to such statements as "the development of new typefaces is a barometer of the stupidity of our profession." True to form, his last book was dedicated "to my friends and enemies."



WESTINGHOUSE LOGO BY PAUL RAND, 1960

A lifelong advocate of the axiom "less is more," he was often criticized for his rejection of a more contemporary design idiom. Rand scorned what he saw in his later years as a postmodern free-for-all, in which sentiment and subjectivity supplanted logic and clarity. The teacher in him saw an opportunity to redefine and to restate the great lessons of the modernist legacy; his writing is tireless in this regard. And the artist in him saw the necessity of promoting the same exacting standards that he used not only to evaluate his own work, but to assess the quality of any great work of art. "The quality of the work always precedes everything else," he explained in an interview not long before his death. "And the quality, of course, is my standard."

Throughout his books, Rand sustained his arguments through repetition that sometimes verged on dogma. He wrote in the rhetoric of the manifesto. Written primer-style on such topics as "The Beautiful and the Useful," "Design and the Play Instinct," and "Intuition and Ideas," his essays were extensively illustrated by visual examples from his own portfolio, and footnoted with citations from his equally extensive library. In Rand's writings, design became a humanist discipline; and his insistence was amplified not only by references to, say, Leger and Albers, but also to Kant, Hegel, Dewey, Whitehead, Bergson, James, and others.

"To design," Rand writes in *Design*,

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Form and Chaos, "is much more than simply to assemble, to order or even to edit: it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade, and perhaps even to amuse. To design is to transform prose into poetry." For Rand, design was an orchestration of rhythm, contrast, balance, proportion, repetition, harmony, and scale—a philosophically sophisticated vocabulary of simple form, specific function, and symbolic content. In his vision, a circle could be a globe, an apple, a face, a stop sign; a square became a gift-wrapped box (the UPS trademark), an Egyptian frieze (the IDEO trademark), or a child's toy (the Colorforms trademark). Over the course of a career that spanned more than six decades, Rand produced a prolific body of work that included advertising and posters, books and magazines, illustration and—perhaps most important—a host of extraordinary trademarks for such corporations as ABC, IBM, UPS, and Westinghouse. It is for these ubiquitous icons that he is best remembered.

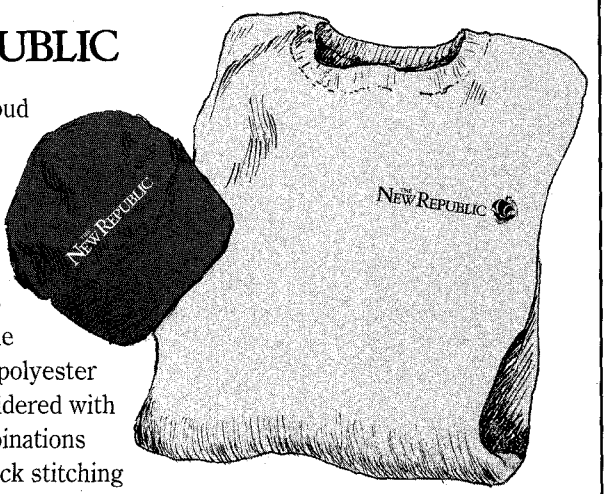
A trademark is a company's signature, an emblematic stamp that establishes its name, and firmly communicates the qualities with which it seeks to identify itself publicly. Its ends, of course, are very concrete: it must furnish a company—and its public—with a visual, material presence in a culture. It is the principal task of the designer to mediate the relationship between the practical demands of the corporation and the formal requirements of its trademark. For Rand, it was an ideal task, which showcased his greatest strengths. It demanded a serious faith in intuition (visualizing the logo that must be recognized instantly by millions of people) and an equal faith in analysis (isolating the idea that must be distilled into its most salient, germane form).

The success of many (though not all) of Rand's logos may be attributed to a number of factors. To begin with, he spent over a decade in advertising, where he developed an acute appreciation for the value of design in the interest of commerce. Working on short deadlines, collaborating with clients and copywriters (it is said that while working for the Weintraub Agency, he personally pioneered the art-and-copy collaborative teams that are widely practiced in most agencies today), Rand quickly learned that design could function as a powerful strategic tool. This experience did little to lessen his commitment to the importance of art: if anything, it reinforced his aesthetic and increasingly modernist leanings. But it also forced him to become ruthlessly pragmatic, even skeptical—qualities that gave him a particular ability to grasp the design needs of the corporations who came to him for what he called "the relevant idea and its formal interpretation."

Rand was blessed with good clients. The corporate America into which Rand was introduced in the 1950s and 1960s was eager to define itself within the context of a relatively new and rapidly growing consumer culture. Rand's purism gave visual form to the exalted ideals of corporate leaders whose great ambition was to embrace new and vast and diverse audiences: this process involved rethinking traditional methods of corporate communication which, in the years directly following World War II, had been largely characterized by unimaginative marketing efforts and unnecessarily decorative design. Given a climate ripe for change, the idea that visual communication could be both powerful and simple was a radical—and a very pragmatic—idea.

Rand himself never claimed to be particularly good at business (he credited this skill to his wife Marion), but he made a point of approaching his projects with laser-beam focus. In the corporate universe, he became an aesthetic evangelist, and he persuaded his clients that they had a vested interest in the importance of good design. Rand had

GEAR UP WITH THE NEW REPUBLIC



THE NEW REPUBLIC is proud to present the latest in casual apparel: THE NEW REPUBLIC sweatshirt and baseball cap.

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an unusual verbal gift, and prepared long and eloquent reports for his clients, in which he presented a new trademark as a carefully documented process, illustrating the evolution of his ideas over time and articulating his argument with clarity and purpose. What was most striking about the reports, however, was Rand's decision to expose the process of his aesthetic and analytical thinking. Here, Rand celebrated the integration of reasoning with the presentation of graphic design. He called these reports the "musical accompaniment" to design.

"A company's reputation is very much affected by how it looks and how its products work," he wrote in "Good Design Is Good Will." "A beautiful object that doesn't work is a reflection on the company's integrity. In the long run, it may not lose only its customers but its good will. Good design will no longer function as the harbinger of good business but as the herald of hypocrisy." He set a high standard, and his clients agreed to accept it (and to pay him six-figure fees for the design of a single trademark). Or most of them did. Steve Jobs reportedly once asked Rand to "design a few logos" for his then-start-up company, NeXT. "If you want a few logos then ask a few designers," Rand barked back. "But if you want me to solve your problem for you, I'll solve your problem for you."

Rand also had the good fortune to work with clients who stayed in their jobs long enough to ensure the longevity of his creations. This may explain why the more enduring logos commissioned over 30 years ago—IBM (1956); Colorforms (1959); Westinghouse (1960); UPS (1961); ABC Television (1962)—have remained virtually unchanged since their creation. Today, of course, the peripatetic and promiscuous nature of business makes such sustained activity more difficult to achieve. The role of trademarks has changed in keeping with new products, activities, and services; the very nature of corporate identity itself has evolved in keeping with technological, social, commercial, and bureaucratic changes. Indeed, the contradiction between Rand's purist view of the logo as a timeless emblem and these complex metamorphoses in business culture may explain why some of Rand's later logotypes—The Limited (1988), or Morningstar (1991)—were received less favorably.

There have been, and there are, other designers and design firms who have made enormous contributions to the practice of corporate identity. Pentagram, Landor Associates, and Chermayeff and Geismar are among many such firms in the United States whose efforts have been widely recognized and whose role, in addition to the design of the mark itself, has grown to include market research, product positioning, and consumer branding. These firms typically work in teams and in collaboration with clients to determine the applications of an identity across a wide range of uses and forms. But Rand worked solo, and only with the person responsible for making the decisions. He was opposed to such things as focus groups, to what he called "design by committee." In this way, he streamlined the nature of the designer's process much as he streamlined the work itself.

In the mid-'50s, Rand produced his most successful logo, the trademark for IBM. Working closely with Eliot Noyes, IBM's consulting director for design, he understood that what mattered was a flexible logo that could be interpreted in different ways by different designers to suit different needs within the corporation. For Rand, this translated into a kind of modular thinking: taking his philosophical cues from architecture (and in particular from the writings of Le Corbusier on similar principles in architecture), he experimented with proportion, scale, color, and humor. For the IBM logo, this translated into a basic equation in which the fundamental mark might be duplicated, rotated, colorized, or mutated in such a way as to play the variable against the constant. In 1970, he extended the boundaries of this notion to include an "eye-bee-m" pictogram which has been widely used in posters and promotional materials ever since.

The trademark itself (commissioned by the conservative Thomas Watson Jr. largely in response to his great competitor Olivetti) was based on City Medium, an obscure typeface designed by George Trump in 1930. Rand designed the initial logo in 1956. Four years later he added the stripes, in an effort to minimize the discrepancy in character widths between the narrow "I" and the wider "B" and "M." His inspiration in striping the letterforms came from observing the multi-lined striations on legal documents designed to discourage counterfeiting. By weighing up the stripes, Rand modernized the font, simplified the mark, and gestured to a kind of visual speed one might rightly associate with a technology company. (He also believed that stripes had a universal appeal, evoking images including Romanesque architecture and Parisian fashion.) Rand went on to design a 13-line variation and later an 8-line variation, which remains the corporate standard today.

IBM is perhaps more the exception than the rule. Rand typically designed trademarks, not corporate identity programs. His marks were simple, modern, geometric abstractions of letterforms, recognizable shapes, and symbols. He designed them to work at any scale or at an angle, on the side of a truck or emblazoned on an annual report cover—but they were rarely conceived of as part of larger, more complex communications programs, designed to embrace evolution and permutation over time or across disparate media. For Rand, a modern mark was a simple mark, and the secret to making things last lay in keeping them simple. In keeping them simple, he was indeed able to lay claim to the greatest endurance record of any trademark designer to date: while the Westinghouse logo was retooled five times between 1900 and 1953, Rand's 1960 redesign has remained intact for 37 years. His 1961 logo for UPS has lasted almost as long. (It is now reportedly being redesigned by Pentagram.)

Do these logos succeed where others fail merely because they are simple? Are they better because they are ubiquitous, making us recognize them more quickly and behave more efficiently as a result? Or do we tire of their inertia, demanding more from our emblems than predictability and sameness? Many classic marks that previously achieved success through widespread recognition—the bell in Bell Telephone, for instance—have been given face-lifts in recent years. These upgraded marks may remain simple in theory, though in practice they reflect more complex uses and are of a more idiosyncratic nature. It is interesting, too, to note the degree to which stripes, particularly in the mid-1980s, started to take on a kind of visual identity of their own, gracing marks for such corporate giants as AT&T (Saul Bass, 1984), Nynex (Lippincott and Margulies, 1984), and the traditionally depicted, though striped, Prudential rock (Lee and Young, 1984).

Today's marks face even greater performance expectations as they compete for attention in a media landscape dominated by increasingly kinetic media. Modernism notwithstanding, a timeless logo is, for some, little more than a tired logo. Consider the UPS logo: fixed and predictable, a beige package trapped inside a heraldic shield on a flat, brown field. Once an emblem of the solid reliability of the United Parcel Service, it is now little more than a gloomy graphic portrait of snail-mail—a fact somewhat exacerbated by the clean look and nonsense efficiency of its greatest competitor, Federal Express, reborn not long ago as "FedEx" in a cheery orange-and-purple identity program redesigned by

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Landor Associates. Or think of the ABC logo: compared to NBC's fluttering peacock, or CBS's blinking eye, Rand's 1962 logo is surprisingly static fare for television—a modernist bubble sporting Bauhaus typography, but static nonetheless.

Looking back on his prolific career, it is paradoxical to think that the man who gave graphic life to such technological giants as IBM, IDEO (the international technology think tank based in Northern California), and Steve Jobs's NeXT should himself have been so averse to the computer. How could Rand, the devout modernist, be so openly resistant to the progressive changes brought about by the machine, the symbolic child of modern industry? It is as though the same geometric forms that embodied the logic of mechanical reproduction, the same formal vocabulary that inspired his mentors and defined the very spirit of modernism, were available to Rand only in theory.

Such contradictions underscored his entire career. The darling of corporate America for decades, Rand rejected the lure of city life, choosing to work alone in his home studio in Connecticut for the better part of his career. He claimed to despise academia, but he remained a devoted member of the Yale faculty for over 35 years. It is likely that the orthodoxy that characterized both his relationship to design and his relationship to God was an attempt to resolve these contradictions, to right the balances, to establish order in the studio and in the spirit. But the contradictory impulses remained: "Five is better than four, three is better than two," he often announced to his students, claiming that the mind worked harder and received a greater sense of reward when resolving asymmetrical relationships on the page.

As Rand grew older, such lessons were taught with even greater passion and emphasis. At the same time, in his own work, the pioneering spirit that led him to push the boundaries of expression in the early years grew decidedly less ambitious. With each successive book, the editorial organization is looser, the type is larger, and the writing is weaker. Rand's last book, *From Lascaux to Brooklyn*, is in many ways his weakest book. The precision that qualified the earlier essays is missing, the ideas follow a less logical path, and the marginalia from philosophy, aesthetics, and literature combine somewhat randomly with Rand's brazen, ex cathedra statements. And yet it is a passionate and exuberant book. "The impulse to creation knows no exception—fashionable or practical," he writes. "Cosmetics or jewelry, flatware or footwear, hammers or nails—it is the urge to invent, to solve problems, visual or mechanical, that really matters." There is Rand's testament, there is Rand going out in a blaze of brains and glory.

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TRB *continued from page 10*

Actually, Alexander *was* practicing a proper kind of affirmative action, but for reasons neither Thernstrom nor Clinton would be terribly comfortable conceding. In the late '70s, relations between white officers and black recruits were so bad that the very stability of some Army units depended on finding blacks to lead them. The country was still just coming out of the Jim Crow era, so the pool of qualified candidates was bound to be small. It made sense to reach deep down into that pool to try to achieve numerical balance in the officer corps, even at some cost to fairness and standards. It made sense in the same pragmatic way that it is necessary today to use affirmative action in recruiting inner-city police forces.

It could be argued, of course, that all Alexander did was provide Powell with "equal opportunity"—a chance to perform at the top level. If so, Powell blew it. In 1981, he went to Fort Carson, Colorado, as assistant division commander to Major General John W. Hudachek. Hudachek rated Powell's performance "average." Privately, Hudachek's assessment was even harsher. "If the division ever had to go to war, he would request that Powell be replaced," Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post* reported in 1995.

Such a rating would ordinarily have meant an early end to Powell's career. But this is where Powell's Washington connections come back into the picture. "In the end, Powell's friends in Washington rescued him from Hudachek and helped him beat the Army system," Woodward writes. General John Wickham, one of Powell's former commanders who had since become Army chief of staff, arranged for Powell to become the military assistant to Caspar Weinberger, the former Nixon OMB chief Reagan appointed secretary of Defense. This relinked Powell to the old Nixon network, which would continue to support him during the Reagan and Bush years.

In promoting Powell, the Republicans were acting out of political self-interest as well as genuine esteem for Powell. They no doubt felt they were practicing the "proper kind" of affirmative action. The presence of Powell in their midst enabled them to argue that not all blacks were liberal Democrats, and, conversely, that not all Republicans were racists. They often cited Powell as proof affirmative action was not necessary at all.

Those seeking objective proof for their ideological contentions about race and achievement will have to look elsewhere; Colin Powell's life story, like those of many if not most Americans of all races, supports the view that neither talent, hard work, personal connections, nor race alone can guarantee success. They all play a part. A little luck helps, too.

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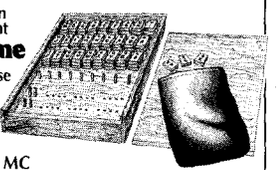

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

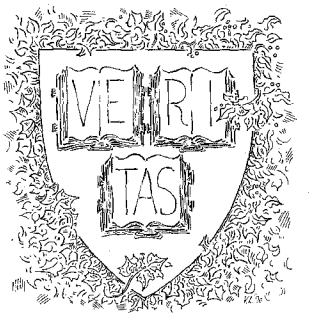
I'm not Pomerantz

IT WAS HUBRIS, PURE AND SIMPLE, which led me to look for my name in the index to *Abuse of Power: The New Nixon Tapes,* edited by Stanley Kutler and recently published by The Free Press. After all, I was very young during Nixon's presidency, and I wasn't even on his "enemies list." So why should my name ever have crossed his lips at all? Well, as it happens, it didn't. Deflated once again, I was about to close this volume of Nixoniana when I noticed a citation to a "Pomerantz (unknown)" on page 137. More out of curiosity than vanity, I turned to find out who this person was. The date of the tape was September 8, 1972, and Nixon was talking to his aide John Ehrlichman in the Oval Office. Watergate had already broken, and the president was trying to reassure himself that it wouldn't help "this Communist sonofabitch"—George McGovern—in the campaign. Still, he was fixated on Democratic fund-raising, and he wanted to know about McGovern's top money man, Henry L. Kimelman. Ehrlichman tells Nixon that *Washington Post* columnist Joseph Alsop had "whacked Kimelman good and hard." The exchange continues:

> Ehrlichman: "[W]e know from the facts that he is getting gifts from ... this left-wing Harvard professor, [first name unknown] Pomerantz, or whatever his name is, whatever."
>
> President Nixon: Pomerantz?
>
> Ehrlichman: I forgot his name. He's a left-wing professor.
>
> President Nixon: Heard a lot about him.

Who is this "him"? Well, it must be me. I fit the specs. In any case, Pomerantz, Peretz, it makes little difference. I was just another troublesome Jew to Nixon. But, then, as this text shows, Nixon was obsessed with Jews. And I (a.k.a. Pomerantz) had indeed made, what was for the time at least, relatively large contributions to George McGovern's campaign.

BUT, BY THE TIME ELECTION DAY arrived, I could not bring myself to vote for McGovern. (No, I did not vote for Nixon.) I've often thought about that first time when I, virtually a genetic Democrat, did not pull the Democratic lever, and I find some comfort in knowing that, on that day, millions of other Democrats also had their hands stayed from doing what otherwise would have come naturally to us. There is no point in rehashing why McGovern drove so many Democrats away; like many others, I defected because of his isolationist foreign and defense policies. I suppose I also realized that, were Israel ever really to be in danger, McGovern would do nothing to help it. As it happens, the test would have come within the first year of his term, on Yom Kippur of 1973, when Syria and Egypt launched a coordinated assault down the Golan and across the Sinai in what was a genuine threat to the survival of the Jewish state. Of course, it may just be that, if Nixon hadn't had Henry Kissinger at his side, and if the Arab armies hadn't been backed by the Soviets, he also wouldn't have resupplied Israel's suddenly and drastically depleted weapons inventory. But Nixon did have Kissinger at his side, and the Middle East was an arena of superpower conflict, and that made a historic difference.



AS RECENTLY AS SIX OR SEVEN years ago, there was a lively strain of anti-Israel opinion in both parties. Among the Republicans, it was lodged at the top, in the persons of George Bush and his secretary of State, James Baker. Their view of the peace process was essentially that, if Israel were to give and the Palestinians were to take, there'd be harmony in the Middle East. But Bush's defeat in 1992 marked the end of that disposition in the GOP; all the remaining big players were friends of Israel. They were friends, moreover, although there seemed to be little prospect of winning votes from American Jews. In the Democratic Party, a few members of the Black Caucus were hostile to Israel, in the vein of Jesse Jackson's hostility and maybe as a sop to Louis Farrakhan, and then there were some in the congressional leadership, like David Bonior and Lee Hamilton, who believed Jerusalem's intransigence was the prime impediment to Middle Eastern peace. Then Bill Clinton and Al Gore were elected, and the Boniors and Hamiltons became irrelevant. The two at the top had such deep affinities for Israel that, even when pressing the Israelis on one matter or another, they seemed to be acting out of friendship, and I believe they were.

SO WHAT DO I SAY NOW THAT THE Bush-Baker analysis of the Middle East is once again governing American policy toward Israel? It is rather dismaying. Iraq continues to assemble an arsenal of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, along with the capacity to deliver them near and far—with Israel as the probable target. Iran, too, continues to acquire and develop various unconventional capabilities of mass death. And, of course, its Hezbollah allies in Lebanon have demonstrated their fervor for engaging Israel in battle. The fact is that for Iran and Iraq, and the weapons they are accumulating, there is no plausible theory of deterrence. Teheran and Baghdad are either permitted to have weapons of mass destruction, or they are not. Proliferation of such weapons among rogue states and their zealot kindred in other countries is now the starkest foreign policy issue facing the United States. But instead what engages Secretary of State Albright and Sandy Berger, the national security adviser, is the effort to make Israel concede the Palestinians more land. This is a cheap alternative gambit for policymakers who've been shown to be weak. Even a right-wing Israeli prime minister will bend somewhat to American will. But do the Clintonites really believe Yasir Arafat—to say nothing of the Muslim apocalyptics—will reciprocate with anything resembling a real peace?

I HAPPEN TO THINK THAT ISRAEL should disgorge as much as it can of the territories—though mainly for its own psychic health. The limits of this disgorging, then, must be security considerations. In any event, no one has yet persuaded me that any reasonably generous concessions, whether from Benjamin Netanyahu or his Labor opposite number Ehud Barak, will conciliate the Palestinian polity to Israel. And, as for Iraq (or, for that matter, Iran), nothing will. This means that toxins, gasses, germs, and nukes will still be aimed at the Jews. God willing, Israel will find some way of destroying this inventory or of destroying Saddam, or, better, both. But failing that, Saddam may one day dispatch his troops through Jordan (where, if he succeeds, they would be celebrated by the local Palestinians), and they will try to cross the river. Whether the Israeli Army is already there in full force to greet the Iraqis will determine the future of the entire region. It would be interesting to know, then, exactly which additional areas of the West Bank the secretary of State expects Israel to transfer to Arafat, who is Saddam Hussein's most loyal ally among the Arabs.

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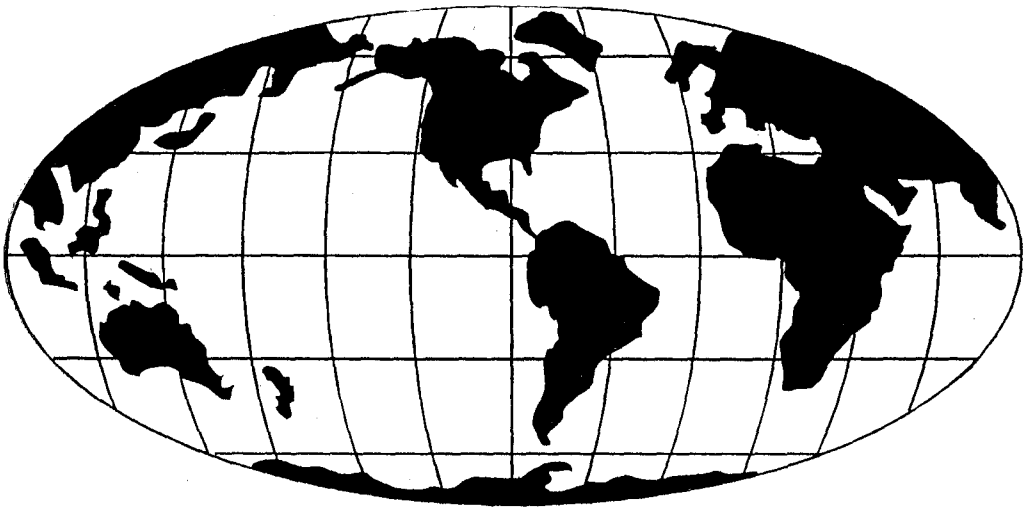

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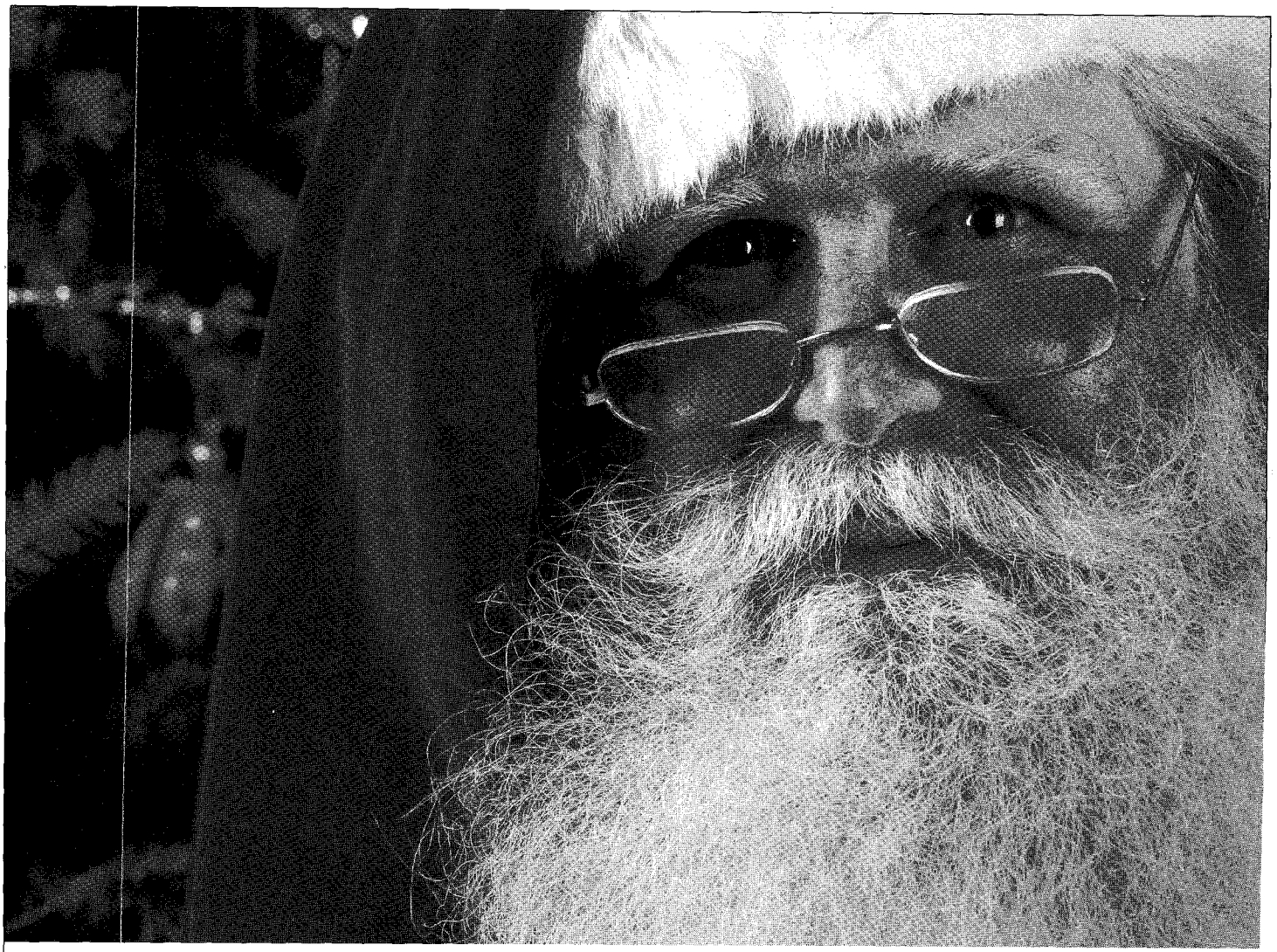

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